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Title:
War on the land : an environmental history of the Second World War and its aftermath in South Eastern France, 1939-1945

War on the Land: An Environmental History of the Second World War and its Aftermath in South Eastern France, 1939-1945

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A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with requirements of the degree of PhD in the Faculty of Arts, Department of Historical Studies, October 2006

79,002 words

Abstract

Through a detailed case study of South-Eastern France, this thesis represents the first environmental history of the "dark years" and their aftermath. Contributing to Vichy historiography, environmental histories of war, and French environmental history, this study argues that nature mattered during the years of war and occupation, both materially and culturally. The natural environment was a site of combat, a means for constructing identities during a time of political and social upheaval, and a "victim" of human conflict.

Following defeat in 1940, the Vichy regime launched an ultimately unsuccessful war against "wasteland," born of ideological convictions and severe material shortages. Forests represented a particularly important source of natural resources and were consequently over-exploited, as well as being transformed into political spaces by both Vichy and the resistance. In addition, occupation armies plundered forest resources and used them for military manoeuvres, developments which French foresters struggled to restrain. Similarly, nature preservationists battled to preserve the Camargue from agricultural modernisation, military manoeuvres, and German submersion plans, aided (unwittingly) by nature. Elsewhere, Vichy and the Club Alpin Français mobilised mountains as a space in which to remake French masculinity. This mobilisation of the mountains was echoed by the resistance, especially in the Vercors, which was transformed into a "natural fortress." This intense human activity necessitated the reconstruction of the environment in the postwar era, which was planned and state-led through schemes such as the Fonds Forestier National. Just as it had between 1940 and 1944, nature continues to matter, and plays a role in preserving and obscuring memories of the war.

Drawing on governmental and other archival sources (some previously unexamined), this thesis aims to demonstrate the relevancy of environmental history to wider historiography, as well as inform contemporary concerns about the complex relationship between war and nature.

Dedication and Acknowledgements

It is a pleasure to acknowledge all those who have supported this doctoral project over the course of three years.

First and foremost, Peter Coates and Tim Cole expertly steered this thesis from its germination to final draft. They have provided encouragement, advice, humour, and insights, as well as a constant supply of exotic teas and organic biscuits. Most importantly, they have helped me focus on the big picture while attending to the small details. At Bristol, Robert Bickers proved an invaluable source of knowledge on research and funding matters, as did Josie McLellan on combining teaching with research. Bill Doyle acted as examiner for my upgrade chapter. My thanks to other faculty members and support staff in the Department of Historical Studies, who offered advice, references, and assistance along the way. Drew Ellis skilfully produced the maps while William Pearson helped me with the statistics. All translations from French are my own, although Ariane Wilson helped me with some of the more troublesome ones.

Elsewhere, Rod Kedward graciously gave up his time to talk to me about my project, suggested contacts, and shared his vast knowledge of the Vichy period. Jessica Irons provided precious advice, generously commented on an early literature review, and invited me to present my ideas at the Modern French History seminar at the University of Oxford. Robert Zaratsky kindly guided me on researching the Camargue, while Brett Bowles supplied valuable information on Alpine films in Vichy France. My thanks also to academics and archivists in France and elsewhere for answering my written and email queries.

I have benefited from the questions, comments and insights of numerous seminar and conference audiences. In particular, Christof Mauch and Charles Closmann of the German Historical Institute, Washington D.C. took a risk in allowing me to present my work at such an early stage. In addition, Dan Sherman and Tamara Whited read a version of chapter four, while chapter three profited from readings by Mark Cioc, Eve Munson, and two anonymous reviewers for the journal *Environmental History*.

On my extended research trip to France, Alain Battaro of the Archives départementales des Alpes-Maritimes played a crucial role in helping to orientate my archival research and suggesting new lines of enquiry. Jean-Marie Guillon of the Université de Provence furnished me with invaluable local knowledge and prevented me from pursuing ideas that would have resulted in dead ends, and Robert Lindeckert introduced me to the Mediterranean forest. At Arles town hall, Nicolas Koukas showed me the site of Saliers camp (without which I would never have found it), supplied useful information, and invited me to speak on the occasion of the inauguration of the camp's memorial. Georges Carlevan of the Association pour le Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation d'Arles et du Pays d'Arles was also very helpful. Eric Coulet, director of the Camargue nature reserve opened up its archives and,

along with Theo, showed me the remains of German bunkers on a windswept beach. Madame Claret and members of the Comité du Bessillon kindly introduced me to the history of resistance in the Haut-Var. Philippe Hanus shared his knowledge of the Vercors, as did Karen Faure-Comte of the Maison de Patrimoine at Villard-de-Lans. I would also like to thank the former *maquisards* and others who opened their homes to me and related their wartime experiences; Eloi Arribert-Narce, Pierre Bichet, Max Dauphin, Robert Lambert, Elvio Segatto, André Salvetti, and Pierre Sellier. In addition, I am grateful to the archivists and librarians who provided assistance in France and the UK.

This research has been made possible by a scholarship from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Bristol and an Arts and Humanities Research Council Postgraduate Doctoral Award. Funding from the Alumni Foundation at the University of Bristol, the Society for the Study of French History, and the department of Historical Studies helped with travel costs for research trips and conferences.

Friends and family have provided support of a more personal nature. Maggie and co., Chris, Matt, and Tom gave me somewhere to stay in London. In Paris, Brigitte Wilson generously let me stay in her "chambre de bonne," while Ariane, Joelle, and Tintin kept me company, as did Sybille, Judith, and Cécile in Marseille. I'm grateful also to Aude and Poppy for their hospitality in Provence, and to family and friends who visited me on what would otherwise have been a lonely research trip. Friends in the Arts Graduate Centre (including the two Cathys, Clare, Jane, John, Mark, and Rose) shared the highs and lows of PhD research, while Keith kept my spirits up. Catherine and Hamish were there when I needed them. Dulcie made the home stretch infinitely more bearable with her love and silliness, and by introducing me (aided by Timmy) to the mountains of North Wales. But this PhD is dedicated above all to my parents, Geoff and Moya, who have given unwavering support, love, and encouragement throughout.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original, except where indicated by special reference in the text, and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other academic award. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: ..... DATE: 21/1/06

Table of contents

List of illustrations

List of tables

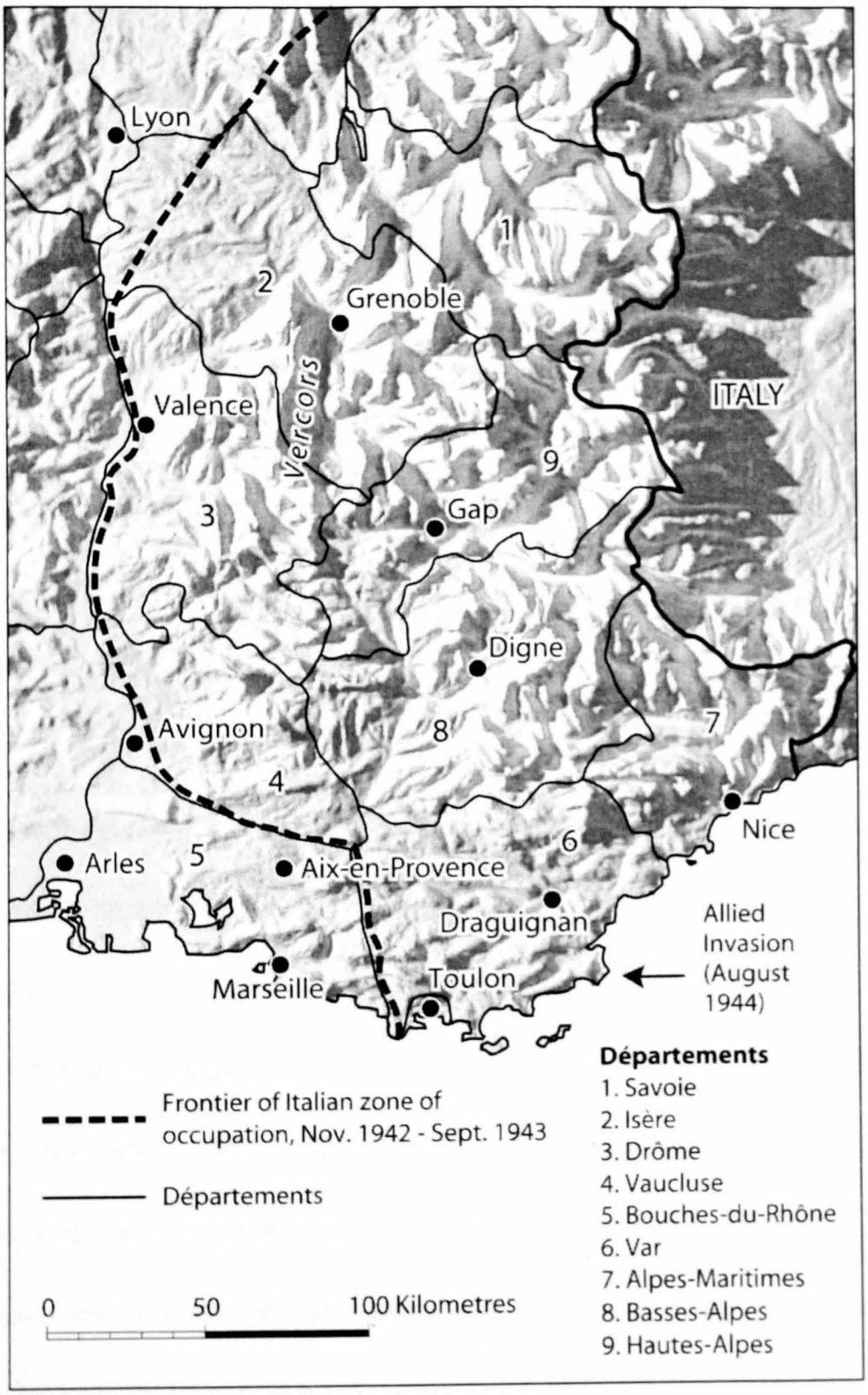
Archive Abbreviations

ADAM	Archives départementales des Alpes-Maritimes
ADBDR	Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône
ADD	Archives départementales de la Drôme
ADHA	Archives départemnetales des Hautes-Alpes
ADI	Archives départementales de l'Isère
ADV	Archives départementales du Var
ADVAU	Archives départementales de la Vaucluse
AMA	Archives muncipales d'Arles
AMVV	Archives municipales de Vassieux-en-Vercors
CACAN	Centre des archives contemporaines des Archives nationales
CHAN	Centre historique des Archives nationales
IWM	Imperial War Museum
MAP	Médiathèque de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine
RNC	Réserve Naturelle de la Camargue
SHAA	Service historique de l'Armée d'Air
SNPN	Société nationale pour la protection de la nature

Map 1: Divided France, 1940-1944

Map by Drew Ellis

Map 2: South Eastern France 1940-1944



Map by Drew Ellis

Chapter One

Introduction

Warfare dramatically transforms the material world. Battles rip up farmland and flatten forests, bombs pound cities, roads, and bridges, people and biota are displaced, borders redrawn, humans and animals killed or maimed, and industrial installations are attacked with potentially huge environmental consequences through the release of pollutants. Some wartime environmental destruction may be "accidental," but there is much truth in W.G. Sebald's comment that 'the innermost principle of every war' aims for 'an annihilation of the enemy with his dwellings, his history, and his natural environment.' [1] The natural world is also part of the battlefield experience; soldiers generally fight in the outdoors, armies pay attention to and mobilise topographical features in their strategic plans, and natural forces and features themselves can disrupt military planning. At the same time, material shortages force societies to rethink their relationship with the environment and their use of natural resources. While environmental modifications and reconfigurations of the relationship between humans and nature are clearly visible during some conflicts, such as the First World War and the Vietnam War (when the US army used defoliants to strip the Viet Cong's

[1] W.G. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction* (London: Penguin, 2003), 19. Notable examples of ecological damage during wartime include the Roman army's salting of Carthage's environs during the Third Punic War and the German military's employment of scorched earth tactics in northern Norway during the Second War World. See Environmental Law Institute, Research Report, *Addressing Environmental Consequences of War: Background Paper for the International Conference on Addressing Environmental Consequences of War: Legal, Economic, and Scientific Perspectives* (Washington D.C.: 1988), accessed at http://www.eli.org, 1.

jungle cover), every conflict potentially alters physical environments and cultural landscapes to some degree. This was manifestly the case during the Second World War in France, even if that particular conflict is commonly assumed to have lacked an environmental dimension. [2] Historians have barely begun to consider relationship between war and nature in Second World War France.

Nature mattered during the period of war and occupation that has come to be known as "the dark years." It was a central component, materially and culturally, of the Second World War and its aftermath in France, acting as a site for military conflict and competing political and social identities. Furthermore, the natural world represented an indispensable source of resources for French society, occupation armies, and Allied soldiers, and a space in which to carry out military manoeuvres. This intensive human activity led to changes on the land. The Vichy regime attempted (unsuccessfully) to reshape the French landscape by waging war on "wasteland," while forests and other habitats were degraded through war's direct and indirect impact. Forest habitat, for example, was damaged directly during battles, but also through overexploitation and illegal felling.

This war damage did not pass unnoticed and foresters battled to secure the conservation of France's forest resources and its own sovereignty over them, while organisations such as the Société nationale d'acclimatation de France (SNAF) fought to preserve other landscapes of natural beauty and scientific interest. Although the power relationship between occupation forces and the SNAF was heavily weighted in favour of the former, the latter did have some success in restraining military use of the Camargue wetlands. The military

[2] During the course of this research, I was frequently informed that the Second World War had no environmental impacts on the French landscape.

mobilisation of the environment is a consistent theme throughout this dissertation. Following the Liberation, Allied forces drew on the resources of the French environment, leading to continuing tensions with foresters and the SNAF. These various military mobilisations contributed to the degradation of the environment, convincing foresters and other officials of the need for greater state intervention in environmental reconstruction and management. In this way, war led to increased human control over nature.

But this is not just a history of war damage and physical changes to landscape. Not least, the Vichy regime's attempt to cultivate as much of French soil as possible was intimately bound up in its attempt to rejuvenate French society and restore a French identity based on supposedly timeless rural values. [3] Furthermore, Vichy mobilised forest and mountain space to strengthen male bodies and rejuvenate French society, a strategy that was increasingly subverted by the resistance's tightening physical and imaginative control over the countryside. However, the resistance's representations of these landscapes were not dissimilar to those of Vichy, even if their aims were diametrically opposed. Just as it was deployed to formulate identity during the "dark years," the environment has become a means of naturalising the links between resistance memories and national identity in the postwar period.

Yet this is not a one-sided story of human dominance over nature and the environmental history of the "dark years" also provides a way to reveal nature's "agency." Nature was not just the object or victim of war and occupation. At times it displayed resilience and resistance to human conflict, thwarting the plans

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[3] As Thomas Lekan argues, with regards to Germany, the 'assertion that there is an organic link between a people and its landscape' is 'one of the most powerful rhetorical means for grounding national identities in modern Europe.' *Imagining the Nation in Nature: Landscape Preservation and German Identity, 1885-1945* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 1.

of combatants. As Lisa Brady argues, with regard to the American Civil War, 'the landscape was not simply a backdrop to the events of the war – a place where battles took place – but a powerful military resource and an important factor in military decision making.' [4] During the war, combatants tried to turn the lie of the land to their advantage. *Maquisards* sought shelter and military advantage in areas of forest, *maquis*, and mountains, while German troops attempted to flood the Camargue to strengthen their Mediterranean defences. Military strategists and geographers have long since identified the strategic importance of landscape and environmental history nuances these analyses by highlighting nature's unpredictability. [5] So while nature does not possess agency in the sense that it consciously undertakes to frustrate human objectives, it was a factor that could not be ignored. After the war, dense *maquis* and forest vegetation undermined the landmine clearance programme, while weather and vegetation threaten to undermine the preservation of war memories. This history, then, is palpably plural, as nature was simultaneously a site, victim, and actor during the "dark years."

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[4] Lisa M. Brady, 'The Wilderness of War: Nature and Strategy in the American Civil War,' *Environmental History* 10/3 (July 2005), 423. A century later, Viet Cong rebels turned the Vietnamese jungle into a military resource, using it as cover for supply routes and raids on U.S. forces. Richard L. Stevens goes so far as to claim that 'nature decided the Viet Nam War, nature and the Ho Chi Minh Trail.' *The Trail: A History of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the Role of Nature in the War in Vietnam* (New York and London: Garland Publising, 1995), ix.

[5] Ted Steinberg shows how mud literally bogged down Union supply trains during the U.S. Civil War, concluding that 'it is simply quite wrong to view the natural world as an unchanging backdrop to the past.' *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 89-98, 284. Military historian John Keegan highlights how the *rasputitsa* (the twice-yearly occasion when autumn rain and melting snow turn the Russian steppes into a gooey mud bath) crucially delayed the attempted German invasion of Moscow during the Second World War. *A History of Warfare* (London: Pimlico, 1993), 63, 67-72. For early military strategists on the environment, see Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Trans. Thomas Cleary (Boston, Mass: Shambhola Publications, 1988), 17, 44, 143; and Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Eds. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 417-52. For more recent military geographies, see Patrick O'Sullivan, *Terrain and Tactics* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1991); and H. A. Winters, Gerald E. Galloway Jr., William J. Reynolds, and David W. Rhyne, *Battling the Elements: Weather and Terrain in the Conduct of War* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

This dissertation is the first comprehensive and detailed exploration of the environmental history of the Second World War in France. [6] This gap in the literature reflects wider historiographical trends as, on the whole, historians are unaccustomed to examining the relationship between war and the environment, even if wars have contained environmental dimensions since at least the Persian-Scythian War of 512 B.C.E, when the Scythians implemented a scorched earth strategy on their own land to slow down the advancing Persians. [7] As Edmund Russell observes, 'with a few exceptions, even historians who have broken down other boundaries have left the war-nature divide intact.' [8] Although historians have demonstrated that war's influence reaches far beyond the battlefield to affect gender relations, national identities, and political, economic, and social structures, they have tended to overlook war's environmental aspects. [9]

Through a detailed case study of South Eastern France, I aim to highlight the multiple ways in which nature mattered during the war and its aftermath. In doing so, I seek to draw upon and contribute to Vichy historiography and the growing body of literature on war's environmental history. I also endeavour to fill in a gap in French environmental history, which has so far overlooked the war years. I argue that environmental history provides a new way of looking at this extensively analysed conflict, by providing alternative narratives and a fresh

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[6] A chapter by Frédéric Fesquet briefly discusses wartime reforestation but limits itself to a single case study and is written from the narrow perspective of 'forest improvement.' See 'Les reboisements de protection dans la guerre: le massif de l'Aigoual,' Andrée Corvol and Jean-Paul Amat (eds.), *Forêt et guerre* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994), 155-61.

[7] Arthur Westing, *Warfare in a Fragile World: Military Impact on the Human Environment* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1980), 14.

[8] Edmund P. Russell, *War and Nature: Fighting Humans and Insects with Chemicals from World War I to* Silent Spring (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2.

[9] For examples of such histories, see Karen Hageman and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (eds.), *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth Century Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2002); Pat Kirkham and David Thoms (eds.), *War Culture: Social Change and Changing Experience in World War Two* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1995); Arthur Marwick, *War and Social Change in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Study of Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and the United States* (London: MacMillan, 1974); and Michael Scriven and Peter Wagstaff (eds.), *War and Society in 20th Century France* (Oxford: Berg, 1991).

way of approaching established themes of historical inquiry, such as analyses of the Vichy regime, resistance, and memory. At the same time, this case study provides a way of understanding more about the complex relationship between war and the environment, which is of increasing concern to environmentalists, policy-makers, and public opinion.

Towards an environmental history of war

Environmental history ('the history of the mutual relations between humankind and the rest of nature,' according to John McNeill [10]) has been hesitant to integrate war into its narratives. This oversight is surprising given that Ralph H. Lutts traces the roots of modern US environmentalism, which was so crucial to the development of environmental history, to the mid-twentieth century climate of fear created by the terrifying prospect of nuclear war, radioactivity arising from weapons testing, and the disturbing realisation that humankind possessed the means to threaten its very survival.[11]

Nonetheless, this relatively new field of history is uniquely well-placed to uncover the historical relationship between war and the environment. Edmund Russell's *War and Nature: Fighting Humans and Insects with Chemicals from World War I to* Silent Spring pioneered the study of war within environmental history and, although more concerned with policy making than the land itself,

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[10] John R. McNeill, 'Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History,' *History and Theory* 42 (December 2003), 6, 17. For other overviews of environmental history, see Alfred W. Crosby, 'The Past and Present of Environmental History,' *American Historical Review* 100/4 (October 1995): 1177-89; and Richard White, 'Afterword. Environmental History: Watching a Historical Field Mature,' *Pacific Historical Review* 70/1 (February 2001): 103-11.

[11] Ralph H. Lutts, 'Chemical Fallout: Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, Radioactive Fallout, and the Environmental Movement,' *Environmental Review* 9/3 (Fall 1985): 210-225.

points to the potential of this growing body of literature. [12] Following Russell's lead, other environmental historians have drawn out the environmental dimensions of warfare across a range of periods and places. [13]

Environmental history can do more than relate the purely ecological history of warfare, as important and interesting as that may be in its own right. Environmental historians are in a position to ask wider and previously unasked questions about war, society, and human and nonhuman agency, especially if the environment is treated as a site where history takes place. Ellen Stroud argues that the environment is not just another category of historical analysis to be placed alongside those of gender, class, and race. Instead, she posits that the importance and relevance of environmental history lies in its focus on the materiality of the past and its recognition of the natural environment as an historical site which other historians tend to overlook. Attention to materiality, Stroud suggests, has the potential to reshape wider historical narratives and open up new sites and sources for historians of all persuasions. By keeping the

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[12] Russell, *War and Nature.*

[13] See Judith A. Bennett, 'War, Emergency and the Environment: Fiji, 1939-1946,' *Environment and History* 7 (2001): 255-87; Brian Black, 'Gallery: Brian Black on the Copse at Gettysberg,' *Environmental History* 9/2 (April 2004): 306-10; Brady, 'Wilderness of War,' 421-47; Rauno Lahtinen and Timo Vuorisalo, '"It's war and everyone can do as they please!" An Environmental History of a Finnish City in Wartime,' *Environmental History* 9/4 (October 2004): 879-700; John R. McNeill, 'Woods and Warfare in World History,' *Environmental History,* 9/3 (July 2004): 388-410; Edmund P. Russell and Richard P. Tucker (eds.), *Natural Enemy, Natural Ally: Toward an Environmental History of Warfare* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2004); William M. Tsutsui, 'Landscapes in the Dark Valley: Toward an Environmental History of Wartime Japan,' *Environmental History* 8/2 (April 2003): 294-311; and Joshua West, 'Forests and National Security: British and American Forest Policy in the Wake of World War I,' *Environmental History* 8/2 (April 2003): 270-94. Ferenc M. Szasz's 'The Impact of World War II on the Land: Gruinard Island, Scotland, and Trinty Site, New Mexico as Case Studies,' *Environmental History Review* 19/4 (Winter 1995): 15-30 predates Russell. The impact of the World Wars on the European environment is briefly considered in Tamara L. Whited, Jens I. Engels, Richard C. Hoffmann, Hilde Ibsen, and Wybren Verstegen, *Northern Europe: An Environmental History* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 128-129; 133-4. Brief, global overviews of war by environmental historians include John R. McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth Century World* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2000), 342-7; and Richard P. Tucker, 'War,' in Shepard Krech III, John R. McNeill, and Carolyn Merchant (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of World Environmental History*, 3 vols., Vol. 3, O-Z, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1284-91.

environment as both the subject and the source of the questions they ask about the past, Stroud argues that historians can 'bring to light connections, transformations, and expressions of power that otherwise remain obscure.'[14]

Stroud's contention that focussing on the materiality of the past illuminates wider power structures is supported by Russell's work on the development of chemical weapons for deployment against insect and human enemies. Russell uses his analysis of the reciprocal and interlocking relationship between war and the environment to highlight how strategies to control, contain, and destroy human and nonhuman enemies shaped the nature of warfare and, in turn, how war expanded human management of the natural world. [15] Following Russell and Stroud, I treat the environment as a site where war unfolds. Not only does war have physical ramifications for the site in which it takes place, but societies deploy the natural world to construct identities while increasing their control over nature during wartime. All these areas deserve greater attention from historians.

In addition to analysing how the environment was simultaneously a site, actor, and victim during the war, one of my main aims is to highlight the war's interlocking material and cultural histories. [16] War damage to the forest motivated foresters and others to limit war's ecological impact, while the Vichy regime's ideological preference for cultivated land threatened to radically transform the French countryside. Furthermore, forests were simultaneously

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[14] Ellen Stroud, 'Does Nature Always Matter? Following Dirt Through History,' *History and Theory Theme Issue* 42 (December 2003), 76, 79-81.
[15] Russell, *War and Nature*, 2.
[16] Russell and Brady highlight the interconnections between ecological and human histories during wartime. Russell argues that 'nature was an important ally on the home front, supplying food and raw materials for industry. Ideas about nature also served the war effort. They helped frame and express views of the enemy, oneself, and the proper interaction between the two.' *War and Nature*, 117. Brady suggests that nature acted as both 'material object and as intellectual idea' during the US Civil War. Brady, 'Wilderness of War,' 423.

physical and imaginative spaces, acting as a site of natural resource extraction and places of supposed individual and national regeneration.

An amalgamation of these material and cultural histories unites the ecological concerns of scientists, such as Arthur Westing, interested in the impact of weapons on ecosystems, with human geographers' analyses of how war transforms space and how spatiality influences warfare. [17] These ecologies and geographies of war advance understanding of military control over the environment, the direct and indirect ecological impacts of war, and the ways in which distance and territoriality both shape and are shaped by war. However, ecologists tend to neglect social aspects of war, while human geographers often overlook ecological changes. And both could pay more attention to historical context. Environmental history, therefore, addresses these imbalances by drawing together the human and ecological dimensions of the war-environment relationship within an historical context.

Environmental history contributes to, complicates, and challenges the assumptions of these existing literatures in other ways. This is particularly true for ecologies of war, which focus on the awesomely destructive power of nuclear and chemical weapons leading them to portray nature as a mere victim. Consequently, they advance "declensionist" narratives (or downward spiral accounts of human interference with the natural world) as they portray the

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[17] For ecologies of war, see J. P. Robinson, *The Effects of Weapons on Ecosystems* (Oxford: Pergamon Press for the United Nations Environment Programme, 1979); Arthur Westing, *Ecological Consequences of the Second Indochina War* (Stockholm: SIRPI, 1976); Idem. *Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Environment* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1977); and Idem. *Warfare in a Fragile World*. For geographies of war see Colin Flint (ed.), *The Geography of War and Peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Dolores Hayden, 'Landscapes of Loss and Remembrance: The Case of Little Tokyo in Los Angeles,' in Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (eds.), *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 142-3; Michael Hefferman, *The Meaning of Europe: Geography and Geopolitics* (London: Arnold, 1998); Patrick O' Sullivan and Jesse. W. Miller, *The Geography of Warfare* (London: Croom Helm, 1983); and Rachel Woodward, *Military Geographies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

expansion of weaponry in the twentieth century as an acceleration of humanity's environmental mismanagement. War becomes yet another indicator of just how far humans have fallen from an Edenic "state of nature." [18] Yet environmental historians have shown how nature's regenerative processes survive military activity. Even in nuclear testing sites in the American West, fauna thrives on land that military exclusion zones protect from encroaching suburbanisation and tourism, while some military installations (unwittingly) encourage wildlife.[19] Furthermore, long-term predictions of ecological deterioration in the Persian Gulf have since been revised, whilst large mammals have again been spotted on the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Vietnam, one of the areas that suffered most from defoliation. [20]

Furthermore, environmental history highlights that the ecological impact of war is historically contingent rather than a mere disruption to nature's supposedly predictable patterns. When assessing ecological disruption, Westing and J. P. Robinson rely on the approach of "old ecology," which regards nature as an orderly system running along the predictable processes of succession.

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[18] On "declensionism," see White, 'Afterword,' 105-6. For damning critiques of military management of the environment, see Anne Ehrlich and John W. Birks (eds.), *Hidden Dangers: Environmental Consequences of Preparing for War* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990); Tom H. Hastings, *Ecology of War and Peace: Counting the Costs of Conflict* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000); Susan D. Lanier-Graham, *The Ecology of War: Environmental Impacts of Weaponry and Warfare* (New York: Walker, 1993); Joni Seager, *Earth Follies: Feminism, Politics and the Environment* (London: Earthscan, 1993); and William Thomas, *Scorched Earth: The Military's Assault on the Environment* (Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1995). For a defence of military environmental management, see Kent Hughes Butts, 'Why the military is good for the environment,' in Jyrki Käkönen (ed.), *Green Security or Militarized Environment* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1994), 83-109.

[19] See John Wills, '"Welcome to the Atomic Park": American Nuclear Landscapes and the "Unnaturally Natural,"' *Environment and History* 7 (2001), 460-64. For another example of eco-systems surviving military activity, see Peter Coates, 'Amchitka, Alaska: Toward the Bio-Biography of an Island,' *Environmental History* 1/4 (October 1996): 20-45. On nuclear testing in the American West and its environmental (and social) consequences, see Mike Davis, 'Dead West: Ecocide in Marlboro Country,' in Valerie J. Matsumoto and Blake Allmendinger (eds.), *Over the Edge: Remapping the American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 339-69; Carole Gallagher, *American Ground Zero: The Secret Nuclear War* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993); and Valerie L. Kuletz, *The Tainted Desert: Environmental and Social Ruin in the American West* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

[20] *Addressing Environmental Consequences of War*, 10.

balance, and climax. Consequently, they measure the extent of war damage according to the length of time it takes for an ecosystem to return to its "original" (or climax) state. [21] However, ecologists and others have since revised interpretations of a stable natural world, emphasising instead unpredictability, contingency, and historical change. [22] I show how environmental war damage resulted in the opportunity for the state to modernise and rationalise the French landscape, rather than restore pre-war conditions.

As well as informing understanding of the ecologies and geographies of war, environmental history contains the potential to influence political, social, economic, and cultural histories of war by highlighting that nature matters during wartime. While gender historians have shown the centrality of gender relations to historical narratives of war, environmental historians of war have yet to demonstrate the importance of nature and human-nature relations during wartime to the wider discipline of history. [23] This is a missed opportunity, as environmental history presents new historical narratives on war (such as wartime nature protection), and alternative ways of examining existing ones (such as the relationship between landscape, war, and identity). Furthermore, an attention to materiality (to follow Stroud) could potentially revise existing concepts such as "total war." Roger Chickering argues that 'total war requires total history' given that 'the impact of warfare on society and politics has become all-embracing.' [24]

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[21] Robinson, *Effects of Weapons*, 30-1; and Westing, *Warfare in a Fragile World*, 10.

[22] White notes a convergence between recent ecology and historiography: 'ecology began to look more and more like history: contingent, shifting, explicable less by predictive laws than backward-looking stories.' 'Afterword,' 105-6. See also Donald Worster, 'Nature and the Disorder of History,' in *Reinventing Nature? Responses to Postmodern Deconstruction* Michael E. Soulé and Gary Lease, eds., (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 1995), 65-85.

[23] Joan W. Scott shows how a gender analysis transforms histories of war in 'Rewriting History,' in Margaret Randolph *et al* (eds.), *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 21-30.

[24] Chickering, however, warns against an uncritical use of the "total war" label as it is all too easily deployed as a part of a master narrative that leads inevitably to the gas chambers of

And although Hew Strachan acknowledges the importance of terrain for armies in his analysis of total war, he fails to develop this line of inquiry and does not consider other ways in which the environment relates to war. [25] Yet as long as the environment remains largely neglected, it is debatable whether or not historians can truly claim to produce "total histories" of "total war."[26] I contend that it is difficult, if not impossible, to write a "total" history of wartime France without paying attention to nature. Even during a war that, at first glance, had few environmental dimensions, nature mattered.

Vichy historiography: history not quite from the ground up

According to Marc Olivier Baruch, the historiography of the "dark years" is 'now the most scrutinised, deciphered, and dissected period of contemporary France.' [27] Initially, the Vichy regime itself was the centre of attention. Historians lent intellectual support to the drive to unify and heal the social divisions that war had intensified, downplaying those aspects of Vichy which were most harmful to France's damaged self-esteem. Most (in)famously, Robert Aron's *Histoire de Vichy* (1954) advanced the so-called "shield theory," which

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Auschwitz. 'Total War: The Use and Abuse of a Concept,' in Manfred F. Boemeke, Roger Chickering, and Stig Förster (eds.), *Anticipating Total War: The German and American Experiences 1871-1914* (New York: German Historical Institute/Cambridge University Press, 1999), 27.

[25] Hew Strachan, 'Total War: The Conduct of War 1939-1945,' in Roger Chickering, Stig Förster, and Bernd Greiner (eds.), *A World at Total War: Global Conflict and the Politics of Destruction 1937-1945* (Washington D.C.: German Historical Institute, 2005), 33-52.

[26] Russell is perhaps alone in examining the links between nature and total war in any great detail when he argues that 'the control of nature formed one root of total war, and total war helped expand the control of nature to the scale rued by modern environmentalists.' Russell, *War and Nature*, 2. See also pp. 95-118.

[27] Marc Olivier Baruch, *Servir l'État français: l'administration en France de 1940 à 1944* (Paris: Fayard, 1997), 3. The two-volume series edited by Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida, *La France des années noires. Tome 1: de la défaite à Vichy* and *La France des années noires. Tome 2: de l'occupation à la Libération* (Paris: Seuil, 1993), attests to the vast array of research areas, as does Hanna Diamond and Simon Kitson (eds.), *Vichy, Resistance, Liberation: New Perspectives on Wartime France* (Oxford: Berg, 2005).

held that Pétain had acted in 'good faith' to spare France the full brunt of Occupation. Aron portrayed the aging First World War veteran in a sympathetic light, whilst blaming Pierre Laval for Vichy's worst excesses and arguing that anti-Semitic measures, such as the 1940 Statut des Juifs, were designed to save French Jews from German persecution. [28] It is easy to attack Aron's scholarship, but at the time his portrayal of Vichy met with a receptive audience. [29] Other historians, however, were more critical of Vichy. German historian Eberhard Jäckel used archival material based in Germany to demonstrate that France was a partner and not just a helpless victim in its dealings with the Nazi regime, however unequal the relationship between the two. [30]

But it was another foreign historian, Robert Paxton, who fundamentally transformed interpretations of Vichy, demolishing the "shield theory" in the process. [31] Paxton's *Vichy France: Old Guard, New Order* (published in 1972) placed Vichy within 'indigenous French history,' rooting it in the tensions of the 1930s and assessing the regime's legacy in the postwar era. Furthermore, Paxton restored agency to Vichy, arguing that the regime had actively attempted to remodel French society; 'Vichy was not a band aid. It was deep surgery. To an extent unique among the occupied nations of Western Europe, France went beyond mere administration during the occupation to carry out a domestic

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[28] Robert Aron, *Histoire de Vichy 1940-1944* (Paris: Les Productions de Paris, 1954), 165-9, 363. Laval was twice deputy prime minister (vice-président du Conseil) of Vichy, from July 1940 to December 1940 and from April 1942 until the regime's demise in August 1944.

[29] Henry Rousso points to *Histoire de Vichy*'s lack of footnotes, its reliance on private, unverifiable sources, and Aron's close relationship with the establishment figures he writes about. *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, Trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991 [1987]), 245-7.

[30] Most damagingly, Jäckel argued that Vichy had room for manoeuvre and introduced its legislative programme without undue German pressure. Eberhard Jäckel, *La France dans l'Europe de Hitler* (Paris: Fayard, 1968), 126, 324.

[31] Although Paxton echoed many of Jäckel's arguments, his work is hailed by historians as the vanguard of a revolution in Vichy historiography. See Jean-Pierre Azéma 'The Paxtonian Revolution,' in Sarah Fishman, Lee Downs, Laura Sinanoglou Ioannis, Leonard V. Smith, and Robert Zaretsky (eds.), *France at War: Vichy and the Historians*, (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 13-20.

revolution in institutions and values.' [32] Paxton's success was based on the quality of his scholarship and *Vichy France*'s opportune publication at a time when French society was generally receptive to interpretations of Vichy that challenged established views. [33]

Extensive research has uncovered the political, economic, social, gender, and cultural histories of this period building on Paxton's groundbreaking work. Following Paxton, historians have concentrated on the more shameful aspects of war and Occupation, such as the histories of collaboration and French persecution of the Jews. [34] Others have shown how Vichy's policies affected such areas as cultural life and gender relations. [35] Meanwhile, in the 1990s,

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[32] Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order 1940-44* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 2001 [1972]), 20, 49.

[33] For more on the French reception of Paxton see John F. Sweets, 'Chaque livre un événement: Robert Paxton and the French, from *briseur de glace* to *iconoclaste tranquille*,' in Fishman *et al*, *France at war*, 21-34.

[34] For collaboration, see Bertram M. Gordon, *Collaborationism in France during the Second World War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1980); and Pascal Ory, *Les collaborateurs, 1940-1945* (Paris, Seuil, 1976). Post-war literary interpretations of collaboration are covered in Alan Morris, *Collaboration and Resistance Reviewed: Writers and the* mode rétro *in Post-Gaullist France* (Oxford: Berg, 1992). For Jewish persecution and resistance to it, see Carmen Callil, *Bad Faith: A Forgotten History of Family and Fatherland* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006); Philippe Joutard, Jacques Poujol, and Patrick Cabanel (eds.), *Cévennes: Terre de refuge* (Montpelier: Presses du Languedoc/Club Cévenol, 1994); Lucien Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance: How Jewish Organizations Fought the Holocaust in France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Lawrence D. Kritzman (ed.), *Auschwitz and After: Race, Culture, and "the Jewish Question" in France* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995 [1981]); Renée Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II* (Hanover NH and London: University Press of New England, 2001); Donna Ryan, *The Holocaust and the Jews of Marseille* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); and Susan Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French, and the Jews* (New York, Basic Books, 1993).

[35] On culture, see Michèle C. Cone, *Artists under Vichy: A Case of Prejudice and Persecution* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Michèle C. Cone, *French Modernisms: Perspectives on Art before, during, and after Vichy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Pierre Darmon, *Le monde de cinéma sous l'occupation* (Paris: Stock, 1997); Evelyn Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox: French Filmmaking under the German Occupation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Pascal Ory, *Le petit nazi illustré: vie et survie de Téméraire (1943-1944)* (Paris: Nautilus, 2002 [1979]); and Jean-Pierre Rioux (ed.), *La vie culturelle sous Vichy* (Paris: Éditions Complexe, 1990). On gender, see Karen Adler, *Jews and Gender in Liberation France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Luc Capdevila, 'The Quest for Masculinity in a Defeated France, 1940-1945,' *Contemporary European History* 10/3 (November 2001): 423-45; Francine Muel-Dreyfus, *Vichy and the Eternal Feminine: A Contribution to a Political Sociology of Gender*, Trans. Kathleen A. Johnson (Durham, N.C. and London: Duke University Press, 2001 [1996]); Miranda Pollard, *Reign of Virtue: Mobilising Gender in Vichy France* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998); and Paula

rejuvenated histories of the resistance emerged, stressing its plurality and geographical and social context. [36] Social histories, however, have moved beyond the emphasis on resistance and collaboration to examine "everyday" life and the strategies adopted for survival. They have stressed the difficult choices that individuals faced and the actions they took to accommodate, survive, or subvert, Vichy and German authorities. [37] In particular, Philippe Burrin defines the ambivalent attitude of accommodation as 'a sense of constraint, material self-interest, personal compliance, and ideological convictions or connivance.' [38] Although the focus of this historiography has progressively drifted downwards, moving from the Vichy regime to embrace social and cultural histories of everyday experience, resistance, and racial persecution it has stopped short of the ground itself. [39]

At times, environmental considerations can be discerned amongst the focus on resistance, collaboration, and social experiences. This can be seen, for example, through analyses of Vichy's 'back to the land' philosophy, wartime rural history, and the geographical context of the *maquis* (the rural resistance

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Schwartz, '"Paritsanes" and Gender Politics in Vichy France,' *French Historical Studies* 16/1 (Spring 1989): 126-51.

[36] Jean-Marie Guillon and Pierre Laborie (eds.), *Mémoire et histoire: la Résistance* (Paris: Éditions Privat, 1995); H. R. Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis: Rural Resistance in Southern France 1942-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003 [1993]); François Marcot (ed.), *La Résistance et les Français: lutte armée et maquis* (Paris: Annales littéraires de l'Université de Franche-Comté, 1996); and Jacqueline Sainclivier and Christian Bougeard (eds.), *La Résistance et les Français: Enjeux stratégiques et environnement social* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1995).

[37] Hanna Diamond, *Women and the Second World War in France 1939-1948: Choices and Constraints* (Harlow: Longman, 1999); Sarah Fishman, *We Will Wait: Wives of French Prisoners of War, 1940-1945* (New Haven CT and London: Yale University Press, 1991); W. D. Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); Lynne Taylor, *Between Resistance and Collaboration: Popular Protest in Modern France, 1940-1945* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); Dominique Veillon, *Vivre et survivre en France 1939-1947* (Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages, 1995); and Richard Vinen, *The Unfree French: Life Under the Occupation* (London: Allen Lane, 2006).

[38] Philippe Burrin, *Living with Defeat: France under the German Occupation 1940-1944* (London: Arnold, 1996 [1995]), 3-4.

[39] For instance, nature is barely mentioned in Julian Jackson's detailed synthesis of secondary literature on the "dark years." *France: The Dark Years 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 14-20.

units that sought refuge in France's mountains and forests and which took their name from *maquis* vegetation).[40] Elsewhere, there are limited and mainly anecdotal references to animals, such as refugees on the 1940 *exode* comparing their sorry plight to those of abandoned farm animals and tales of wolves escaping from the Paris zoo. [41]

But the main focus is never on the natural environment itself. Even when François Boulet argues that from 1943 onwards the 'French mountains became an historical actor' as they offered possibilities for refuge and resistance, his approach remains overwhelmingly anthropocentric. [42] Similarly, Alice Travers' account of Vichy's policies and representations of mountains concentrates on sport and youth movements, rather than the mountains themselves. [43] Likewise, Hilary Footitt's brief description of D-Day landscapes is analysed very much from the soldiers' point of view, while Danièle Voldman's history of postwar landmine clearance operations takes little account of the actual terrain upon

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[40] For 'back to the land' philosophies, see Jackie Clarke, 'Homecomings: Paulette Bernège, Scientific Management and the Return to the Land in Vichy' in Diamond and Kitson, *Vichy, Resistance, Liberation*, 171-82; Christian Faure, *Le projet culturel de Vichy* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1989); and Jean Vigreux, *Le vigne du Maréchal Pétain ou un faire-valoir bourguignon de la Révolution nationale* (Dijon: Éditions Universitaires de Dijon, 2005). For rural France, see Isabel Boussard, *Vichy et la corporation paysanne* (Paris: Presses de la fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1980); Michel Gervais, Marcel Jollivet, and Yves Tavernier, *Histoire de la France rurale. Tome 4: la fin de la France paysanne de 1914 à nos jours* (Paris: Seuil, 1976); Bertram M. Gordon, 'The Countryside and the City: Some Notes on the Collaboration Model during the Vichy Period,' in Fishman *et al*, *France at War*, 145-60; and Don Kladstrup and Petie Kladstrup, *Wine and War: The French, the Nazis, and France's Greatest Treasure* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2001). For the resistance, see Ian Higgins, 'France, Soil, and Language: Some Resistance Poems by Luc Berimont and Jean Marcenac,' in H. R. Kedward and Roger Austin (eds.), *Vichy France and the Resistance: Culture and Ideology* (London: Croom Helm, 1985); H. R. Kedward, 'Rural France and the Resistance,' in Fishman *et al*, *France at War*, 125-43; and Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*.

[41] For the *exode*, see Andrew Shennan, *The Fall of France: 1940* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000), 8. For the wolves, see Richard Cobb, *French and Germans, Germans and French: A Personal Interpretation of France under Two Occupations 1914-1918/1940-1944* (Hanover NH: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 1983), 128-31.

[42] François Boulet, 'Montagne et résistance en 1943,' in Guillon and Laborie, *Mémoire et histoire*, 261-69. See also Gilbert Garrier, 'Montagnes en résistance: réflexions sur des exemples en Rhône-Alpes,' in Sainclivier and Bougeard, *La Résistance et les Français*, 207-20.

[43] Alice Travers, *Politique et représentations de la montagne sous Vichy: la montagne éducatrice 1940-1944* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001).

which the mines lay. [44] In addition, while Voldman and others have worked on wartime urban destruction and the postwar reconstruction of the built environment, the natural environment's physical transformation and reconstruction has been left untouched. [45]

Similarly, regarding memories of the war, the analytical focus rests mainly on films, legal trials, and political scandals. [46] Work on memorial landscapes largely consists of inventories of memorials or focuses on the role of memorials and museums in the production of memory. [47] Although Sarah Farmer's *Martyred Village* is sensitive to landscape concerns, its primary focus is on the human effort to preserve memory rather than landscape itself. [48] Accounts of memorial landscapes in other national setting recognise the importance of place and space when analysing memorials. [49] However, most of the memorials

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[44] Hilary Footitt, *War and Liberation in France: Living with the Liberators* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillian, 2004), 39-48; and Danièle Voldman, *Le déminage de France après 1945* (Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob, 1998).

[45] Danièle Voldman, *La reconstruction des villes françaises de 1940 à 1954: histoire d'une politique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997). See also Hugh Clout, 'Ruins and Revival: Paris in the Aftermath of the Second World War,' *Landscape Research* 29/2 (April 2004): 117-39; Nicola Lamborne, *War Damage in Western Europe: The Destruction of Historic Monuments During the Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001); and *Reconstructions et modernisation: la France après les ruines 1918... 1945...* (Paris: Archives de France, 1991).

[46] Memories of war are perhaps more readily associated with the landscapes of the First World War. For the British, poppies have become a symbol of the loss of life in the trenches, while Germany commemorated its dead within sacred groves. See George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 107-25.

[47] For war memorials, see Serge Barcellini and Annette Wieviorka, *Passant, souviens-toi! Les lieux du souvenir de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale en France* (Paris: Plon, 1995). For museums, see Marie-Hélène Joly, 'War Museums in France,' in Sarah Blowen, Marion Demoisser, and Jeanine Picard (eds.), *Recollections of France: Memories, Identities and Heritage in Contemporary France* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2000), 33-5; and Daniel J. Sherman, 'Objects of Memory: History and Narrative in French War Museums, *French Historical Studies* 19/1 (Spring 1995): 49-74. For Holocaust memorials, see Peter Carrier, *Holocaust Monuments and National Memory Cultures in France and Germany since 1989* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2005); and Caroline Wiedmer, *The Claims of Memory: Representations of the Holocaust in Contemporary Germany and France* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999).

[48] Sarah Farmer, *Martyred village: Commemorating the 1944 Massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane* (Berkley CA: University of California Press, 1999).

[49] As Nuala Johnson argues, 'the space which... memorials occupy is not just an incidental material backdrop, but in fact inscribes the statues with meaning.' 'Cast in Stone: Monuments, Geography, and Nationalism,' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 13 (1995), 51. For more on the links between landscape and memory see Tim Cole, *Holocaust City* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 221-49; Kenneth Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence*

analysed are located in urban rather than natural environments. Furthermore, when memory and "natural" landscapes are considered together, nature is often treated as an unproblematic backdrop to human memories. [50] An important exception, however, is Andrew Charlesworth's and Michael Addis' research on the 'ecological landscapes' of Holocaust sites, in which they show that the preservers of memory are forced to grapple with nature's dynamism and develop ecological management strategies in an attempt to maintain historical "authenticity." [51] Following Charlesworth's and Addis' lead, I focus in chapter seven on the connections between memories and "natural" landscapes, including the role of nature in preserving memories, and the impact of nature processes on memorial sites. As such, chapter seven demonstrates the continuing relationship between war and nature in postwar France.

There are two possible explanations for why an environmental history of the "dark years" has not yet been written. Firstly, environmental modifications and human experiences of landscape during the Second World War in France have been overshadowed by the devastation of the First World War. It is relatively well known how four years of trench warfare in North and Eastern France led to the destruction of vast swathes of farmland, forests, and villages, necessitating an extensive postwar programme of environment reconstruction. [52]

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and Tragedy (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003 [1997]); Brian Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997); Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: the Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge, 1995, 2003); and James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: University of Yale Press, 1993).

[50] See, for example, Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: Fontana, 1996).

[51] At the Auschwitz site nature acts in surprising ways; the increasing mole population means that 'molehills of grey ash and white bone' disrupt newly created lawns. Andrew Charlesworth and Michael Addis, 'Memorialisation and the Ecological Landscapes of Holocaust Sites: the Cases of Auschwitz and Plaszow,' *Landscape Research* 27/3 (2002): 229-51.

[52] For this environmental destruction, see Jean-Paul Amat, 'Guerre et milieux naturels: les forêts meurtries de l'est de la France 70 ans après Verdun,' *L'Espace Géographique* 3 (1987): 217-33; and numerous chapters in Corvol and Amat, *Forêt et guerre*. For postwar reconstruction, see

Given the appalling material conditions of trench warfare, it is unsurprising that historians and others detail how soldiers responded to and, in the case of trench gardens, resisted, the environment of mud, shells, barbed wire, and rats in which they lived and fought. [53] In comparison, it is assumed that the Second World War resulted in little, if any, environmental modification and left few physical traces. Voldman contends that even though the countryside was 'not spared' by the Second World War, the damage inflicted upon it was 'proportionately much less than during the First World War,' while Omer Bartov makes the case that bar a number of 'discreetly placed' memorials there is no 'physical, plastic presence to remind one of Vichy which even remotely compares with the massive memorials and vast cemeteries of the First World War, nor for that matter, with the concentration camps in Germany.' [54] However, as my thesis argues, environmental modification of the natural environment during the Second World War was substantial. Although Bartov is correct to suggest that there is no site to compare with the scale of cemeteries and concentration camps, the physical traces of the Second World War pepper the contemporary French landscape.

The second reason to explain the absence of environmental histories of the "dark years" is that human suffering and deaths would seem to far outweigh considerations of nature. Social histories outline the range of hardships that faced

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Hugh Clout, *After the Ruins: Restoring the Countryside of Northern France after the Great War* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996).

[53] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975); Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 107-25; and Martin Warnke, *Political Landscape: The Art History of Nature*, Trans. David McLintock (London: Reaktion Books, 1994 [1992]), 60-2, 72-4. On trench gardens, see Kenneth I. Hepland, *Defiant Gardens: Making Gardens in Wartime* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 2006), 21-59. For postwar attempts to make meaning of the trench landscape, see Mandy S. Morris, 'Gardens "For Ever England": Identity and the First World War British Cemeteries on the Western Front,' *Ecumene* 4/4 (October 1997): 410-34; and David W. Lloyd, *Battlefield Tourism: Pilgrimage and the Commemoration of the Great War in Britain, Australia and Canada, 1919-1939* (Oxford: Berg, 1998).

[54] Voldman, *Reconstruction des villes françaises*, 17; and Omer Bartov, 'Trauma and Absence: France and Germany, 1914-45,' in Paul Addison and Angus Calder (eds.), *Time to Kill: The Soldier's Experience of War*, (London, Pimlico, 1997), 350.

the French, including coping with absent prisoner of war husbands, severe food shortages, and daily compromises and humiliations experienced under the Occupation. While Robert Gildea questions how "dark" the "dark years" actually were, the overall picture of the war years in unsurprisingly bleak. [55] This is especially true for those groups singled out for persecution by the Vichy regime and Nazi authorities, such as French and "foreign" Jews, who faced internment on French soil and deportation to the concentration camps of Eastern Europe. Furthermore, the postwar creation and destruction of the redemptionary myth of resistance, controversies surrounding collaboration, the articulation of Jewish memories from the 1970s onwards, and the trials of former Vichy *fonctionnaires*, such as Maurice Papon, attest to the difficulties the French have faced in coming to terms with their past (which Henry Rousso memorably diagnoses as a "Vichy Syndrome"), meaning that considerations of the environment have been obscured. [56]

However, the environmental history of the war does not diminish human suffering. [57] Instead, it adds to our understanding of the hardships faced by the French during the Occupation. Not least, German timber requisitions deprived

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[55] Robert Gildea, 'Les années noires? Clandestine Dancing in Occupied France,' in Ceri Crossley and Martyn Cornick (eds.), *Problems in French History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), 197-212. See also Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: In Search of the German Occupation of France, 1940-45* (London: McMillan, 2003).

[56] The key text on French memories of Vichy is Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*. See also Eric Conan and Henry Rousso, *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas* (Paris: Fayard, 1994); Richard Golsan, *Vichy's Afterlife: History and Counterhistory in Postwar France* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2000); Pieter Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe 1945-1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Nancy Wood, *Vectors of Memory: Legacies of Trauma in Postwar Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 1999). For the "reawakening" of Jewish memory, see Maud S. Mandel, *In the Aftermath of Genocide: Armenians and Jews in Twentieth Century France* (Durham NC and London: Duke University Press, 2003); and Joan Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2004). For a critique of the "Vichy syndrome" analysis, see Bertram Gordon, '"The Vichy Syndrome" problem in History,' *French Historical Studies* 19/2 (Autumn 1995), 495-518.

[57] As Robinson argues, 'there are numerous examples in history, both recent and ancient, of human societies suffering appallingly from military assaults on their natural environment.' *Effects of Weapons on Ecosystems*, 6.

the French of natural resources that were desperately needed for heating, cooking, and transport, while the harsh natural environments of French internment camps accentuated the suffering of internees, who were buffeted by winds all year round, frazzled by the sun in summer, and floundered in mud during the winter. [58] The destruction of the environment also saddened some observers. Flying over northern France, noted author and pilot Antoine de Saint-Exupéry lamented seeing houses and forests burning as the German army advanced. 'The sense of everything changes. Three hundred year old trees that shelter your family home block the firing range of a twenty-two year old lieutenant. So he sends in fifteen men to destroy history's work. In ten minutes, they consume three hundred years of patience, sun, and life under the shade.' [59]

But nature could offer some solace from the war and trying personal circumstances. One observer noted in 1942 how 'the study of nature is calming in this infernal century in which we live. It makes us better and keeps our hearts intact.' [60] An environmental history of war, therefore, augments human wartime histories, even if it is entirely understandable if the latter have overshadowed the former. Having attempted to explain why Vichy historiography has neglected environmental considerations, I turn now to the neglect of the war years within French environmental history.

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[58] I recount this history in 'Places of Persecution: Towards an Environmental History of Internment in Provence,' a paper presented at the Society for the Study of French History's annual conference, University of Southampton, 4-5 July 2005. For general histories of internment camps, see Jacques Grandjonc and Theresia Grundtner (eds.), *Zone d'ombres 1933-1945: exil et internement d'Allemands et d'Autrichiens dans le sud-est de la France* (Aix-en-Provence: Éditions Alinéa and Erca, 1990); Anne Grynberg, *Les camps de la honte: les internées juifs des camps français, 1939-1944* (Paris: Éditions de la découverte, 1991); and Denis Peschanski, 'La France des camps (1938-1946),' PhD diss. University of Paris I (2000), accessed at http://histoire-sociale.univ-paris1.fr/Denis.htm.

[59] Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Pilote de Guerre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1942), 89-90.

[60] Frédéric Gaymard, *Camargue* (Marseille: R. Laffont, 1942), 11.

French environmental history and the "dark years"

Although it was in 1942 that the term *environnement* was reportedly first coined in France, environmental histories of French have so far overlooked the Second World War. [61] Consequently, there is a gap between environmental histories of the pre-war and post-war eras. On the one hand, Tamara Whited's study of mountain forestry policy and Caroline Ford's overview of French nature conservation and preservation movements end just before the outbreak of the Second World War. On the other hand, the analyses of Michael Bess, Gabrielle Hecht, and Sara Pritchard on the relationship between technology, society, and the environment focus on the post war period. [62] My thesis, therefore, aims to bridge the chronological divide between these studies.

In seeking to integrate the war within existing narratives of the French environmental history in the twentieth century, I aim to contribute to understanding of both continuities (such as forestry policy) and changes (such as the expansion of uncultivated land during the war). This is important, as the war represents a turning point in contemporary French environmental history. Both Bess and Hecht identify the changes the war brought to the relationship between society, technology, and the environment. The war had starkly exposed the

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[61] Albert Demangeon used the term 'environnement' in an unpublished work. See Jean-Louis Tissier, 'Du milieu à l'environnement: l'émergence d'un concept dans le discours des géographes français,' in René Guilbot Neboit and Lucette Davy (eds.), *Les français dans leur environnement* (Paris: Éditions Nathan, 1996) 19.

[62] Michael Bess, *The Light-Green Society: Ecology and Technological Modernity in France, 1960-2000* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Caroline Ford, 'Nature, Culture and Conservation in France and her Colonies 1840–1940,' *Past and Present* 183 (May 2004): 173-98; Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II* (Cambridge Mass.: The MIT Press, 1998); Sara Pritchard, 'Reconstructing the Rhône: The Cultural Politics of Nature and Nation in Contemporary France, 1945-1997,' *French Historical Studies* 27:4 (Autumn 2004): 765-99; and Tamara L. Whited, *Forests and Peasant Politics in Modern France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000).

deficiencies of France's political, social, and economic structures and forced their reconsideration with subsequent environmental effects. Bess and Hecht show how the French state mobilised technology to ensure France's independence and grandeur. [63] Chapter six demonstrates that a similar development occurred during the reconstruction of the environment itself; the introduction of the *Fonds Forestier National* in 1946 was intended, in part, to increase national self-sufficiency, thereby ensuring France's independence.

One reason for the lack of environmental histories of the war is that constructions of an essentially peaceful French countryside remain strong within the academy and society. [64] According to Armand Frémont, the French countryside has been crafted 'with understanding gentleness rather than massive attack: not for nothing is the country known as *la douce France*.' The cultivation of French soil was conducted 'without violence to nature's rhythms' with apparently no 'warfare against the soil.' [65] For Simon Schama, meanwhile, *la douce France* describes 'the sweetness of a classically well-ordered place where rivers, cultivated fields, orchards, vineyards, and woods are all in harmonious balance with each other.' [66] The trope of *la douce France* hardly creates a conducive atmosphere for considering the role conflict plays in shaping the French environment.

Another reason for the lack of environmental histories on the Second World War is that relatively few French and non-French historians work on the

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[63] Bess, *Light-Green Society*, 20; and Hecht, *Radiance of France*, 1-3.
[64] There are some exceptions, such as Amat and Corvol's *Forêt et guerre* and Peter McPhee's *Revolution and Environment in Southern France 1780-1830: Peasants, Lords, and Murder in the Corbières* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 125-6.
[65] Armand Frémont, 'The Land,' in Pierre Nora (ed.), *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past. Volume 2: Traditions*, Trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 25.
[66] Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 15.

environmental history of France. [67] This is especially true in comparison to the number of historians researching U.S. environmental history, and the burgeoning body of environmental histories of Germany. [68] Perhaps this relative weakness is understandable in the country that is the birthplace of René Descartes, the philosopher who segregated the world into the human and the non-human and asserted that the former were the 'masters and possessors of nature,' and where rural history is traditionally well represented in academia. [69] So while some historians of rural France have researched the relationship between the military and the peasantry and others have analysed rural history during the Second World War, the same cannot be said for environmental historians. [70]

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[67] McNeill notes that French scholars are 'poorly represented in the ranks of environmental history. 'Observations,' 29. Similarly, Jean-Paul Deléage argues that French ecologists have been less influential than their English-speaking colleagues. *Une histoire de l'écologie* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), 13. Recent overviews of French environmental history include Michael Bess, Mark Cioc, and James Sievert, 'Environmental History Writing in Southern Europe,' *Environmental History* 5/4 (October 2000): 545-56; and Caroline Ford, 'Landscape and Environment in French Historical and Geographical Thought: New Directions,' *French Historical Studies* 24/1 (Winter 2001): 125-34.

[68] For Germany, see David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006); Franz-Josef Brüggemeier, Mark Cioc, and Thomas Zeller (eds.), *How Green Were the Nazis? Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005); Mark Cioc, *The Rhine: An Eco-Biography, 1815-2000* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2002); Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature*; Thomas Lekan and Thomas Zeller (eds.), *Germany's Nature: Cultural Landscapes and Environmental History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005); and Christof Mauch (ed.), *Nature in German History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004).

[69] Descartes quoted in Peter Coates, *Nature: Western Attitudes since Ancient Times* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 75-6. Philosopher Luc Ferry offers a contemporary defence of Cartesian humanism in his attack on deep ecology, which he argues is a continuation of Nazi ecology. See *The New Ecological Order*, Trans. Carol Volk (Chicago: The Chicago Press, 1995). For critiques of Ferry, see Bess, *Light-Green Society*, 130-40; and Kerry Whiteside, *Divided Natures: French Contributions to Political Ecology* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2002), 3. For the strength (and weaknesses) of rural history in France, see Ford, 'Landscape and Environment,' 125; and Susan Carol Rogers, 'Natural Histories: The Rise and Fall of French Rural Studies,' *French Historical Studies* 19/2 (Fall 1995): 382-97.

[70] Gervais, Jollivet, and Tavernier describe the world wars as the 'capital events in the history of rural France,' *Histoire de la France rurale*, 12. For links between rural France and the military, see Craig Gibson, 'The British Army, French Farmers, and the War on the Western Front, 1914-1918,' *Past and Present* 180 (August 2003), 175-240; Gérard de Puymège, 'The Good Soldier Chauvin,' in Pierre Nora (ed.), *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past. Volume 2: Traditions*, Trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 332-60; and Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernisation of Rural France 1870-1914* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1979), 298-9.

The state of environmental history in France, however, is not as bleak as these observations suggest. According to Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud, there is life in French environmental history, even if historians interested in this area tend to work in isolation from others researching similar themes. Alluding to comic strip hero Asterix, Massard-Guilbaud argues that the ingredients for a successful French environmental history are already in place, waiting to be mixed together to form the 'magic potion.'[71] As if to offer encouragement to their French colleagues, English-speaking environmental historians suggest that these ingredients have existed for a good many years in France, pointing to French geographers and *Annales* historians as forerunners of contemporary environmental history. [72] Not least, Lucien Febvre's stress on the mutual relations between humans and the environment seems to have provided the blueprint for contemporary environmental history back in the 1920s:

> To act on his environment, man does not place himself outside it. He does not escape its hold at the precise moment when he attempts to exercise his own. And conversely the nature which acts on man, the nature which intervenes to modify the existence of human societies, is not a virgin nature, independent of all human contact; it is a nature already profoundly impregnated and modified by man. There is a perpetual action and reaction. The formula "the mutual relations of society to environment" holds equally good for the two supposed distinct cases. For in these relations, man both borrows and gives back, whilst the environment gives and receives. [73]

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[71] Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud, 'De la "part de milieu" à l'histoire de l'environnement,' *Le Mouvement Social* 200 (July-September 2002), 71-2.
[72] Crosby, 'Past and Present of Environmental History,' 1183.
[73] Lucien Febvre, *A Geographical Introduction to History*, Trans. E.G. Mountfield and J.H. Paxton (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1925), 361. On the *Annales* historians, see Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School, 1929-89* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

This statement contains at least two of the traits of contemporary environmental history; the interconnectedness of humans and nature and the stress on a highly modified "natural" environment. [74]

However, while environmental history owes much to the innovations of *Annales* historians it appears misleading to fashion them into avant-garde environmental historians. [75] As Massard-Guilbaud points out, the *Annales* largely failed to realise Febrve's formula of "the mutual relations of society to environment" and tended instead to focus on one half of this equation at the expense of the other. [76] Moreover, when the two halves are considered in tandem the environment becomes static to the point where its history is almost denied. For Braudel, the interlocking history of humans and the environment 'is almost imperceptible...a history in which all change is slow, a history of constant repetition, ever-recurring cycles.' He 'could not neglect this almost timeless history, the story of man's contact with the inanimate.' [77] In contrast, more recent accounts of the French environment have stressed the constantly changing physical landscape and evolving cultural meanings of nature. [78]

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[74] There is also a degree of similarity between Febrve's thesis and those of contemporary French green theorists. With regards to the latter, Whiteside argues that they 'elaborate green thought more often by *reciprocally problematizing* "nature" and "humanity" than by refining distinctions between them.' *Divided Natures*, 3. Emphasis in original.

[75] McNeill, 'Observations,' 14-5.

[76] Massard-Guilbaud, ' "Part de milieu" à l'histoire de l'environnement,' 67. Compare, for example, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Times of Feast, Times of Famine: A History of Climate since the year 1000*, Trans. Barbara Bray (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1972) with Marc Bloch, *French Rural History: An Essay on its Basic Characteristics*, Trans. Janet Sondheimer (London: Routledge and Regan Paul, 1966 [1931]).

[77] Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Trans. Siân Reynolds (London: Collins, 1972), 20.

[78] Bess, *Light-Green Society*; A. Cadoret (ed.), *Protection de la nature: histoire et ideologie, de la nature à l'environnement* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985); Xavier de Planhol and Paul Claval, *An Historical Geography of France*, Trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988); Pierre Dérioz, René Neboit-Guilhot, and Jean Renard, 'Des espaces ruraux fragiles et des paysages en mutation,' in Neboit-Guilhot and Davy (eds.), *Les français dans leur environnement*, 145-81; Jean-Robert Pitte, *Histoire du paysage français: de la préhistoire à nos jours* (Paris: Editions Tallandier, 2003 [1983]); and Pritchard, 'Reconstructing the Rhône.'

Chapter One

War and occupation ushered in new attitudes to nature and heightened existing ones. Throughout this period there was a strong emphasis on the productivity of the land. The material conditions in post-defeat France informed the Vichy regime's war against "wasteland," while shortages after Liberation placed productive land at premium. Similarly, Vichy attempted to boost forestry production, as did the post-1944 republican governments and both launched reforestation schemes that aimed to increase the forests' capacity.

However, "wild," largely unproductive landscapes were also invested with new meanings during the war. The most striking aspect of this history was the reinvention of the *maquis*. This form of Mediterranean vegetation was considered a worthless landscape before the war, but rural resisters' adaptation of its name transformed it into a landscape that was valued for protecting French democratic values during the Occupation. This appreciation of the *maquis* shows the power of war to transform cultural constructions of landscape, as well as revising common assumptions that the French only value domesticated land. Paxton, for instance, argues that 'for Americans, it is the frontier and the wilderness that serve as reservoirs of moral values... In the United States, the land is most sacred where the individual is most unfettered. In France, the land is most sacred where the human community is most intact.' Possibly displaying an American affection for wilderness, Paxton critiques France's apparent obsession with cultivated land and suggests that instead of 'lamenting the supposedly idle "fallow," France could rejoice in increased game, the recovery of rare plants and

animals, more recreational possibilities, and more natural beauty in marshes, brushy edges, and moorlands.' [79]

But as the histories of the maquis and the campaign to save the Camargue's supposed wild landscape suggest, the French appreciate landscapes that do not resemble *la douce France*. My region for this study, the South East of France, was partially chosen to enable me to focus on the "wilder" aspects of the French landscape, such as the Camargue wetlands, Vercors mountain range, and the Mediterranean forest of Provence.

Introducing my case study

Scale varies widely in environmental histories. At its widest, it encompasses the global, such as McNeill's account of worldwide ecological transformations during the twentieth century. [80] At the other end of the spectrum, Dan Flores favours bioregional histories that analyse 'deep time in a single place.' [81] Both these approaches have their particular strengths and weaknesses. The global approach recognises the immense scope of environment changes, while place-centred studies draw out *longue durée* history within an ecologically coherent and bounded space. However, the former approach threatens to swallow up local detail and difference and relies heavily on secondary literature, while the latter runs the risk of isolating places from wider natural and social contexts.

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[79] Robert. O. Paxton, *French Peasant Fascism: Henry Dorgères's Greenshirts and the Crises of French Agriculture, 1929-1939* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1997), 181-3. For a critique of America's fascination with wilderness, see Willliam Cronon, 'The Trouble with Wilderness or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,' *Environmental History* 1/1 (January 1996): 7-28.

[80] McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*.

[81] For Flores, 'natural geographic systems,' such as ecosystems, 'are the appropriate settings for insightful environmental history.' Dan Flores, 'Place: An Argument for Bioregional History,' *Environmental History Review* 18/4 (Winter 1994), 6, 10.

Richard White offers a way out of a possible methodological impasse when he suggests that environmental histories must engage with multiple scales (global, national, and local) as this takes into account the complexity of the past and the fact that lives are lived on intermeshing scales. [82]

With these considerations in mind – and in line with the growth of place-centred studies within Vichy historiography [83] – I treat South Eastern France as a regional case study (an area that extends from the Southern Alps to the Mediterranean coastline, flanked by the Rhône to the West and the Italian border to the East). An environmental history of the whole of France lies beyond the scope of this study, yet this region makes a particularly useful case study for both its ecological and political variety. Ecologically, this area contains a range of forest types, from the beech trees of the prealpine Vercors to the Mediterranean forests that hug the Provencal coastline. Furthermore, the region experienced numerous political and military authorities between 1940 and 1944; it formed part of the "Unoccupied" Zone governed by the Vichy regime and was subsequently under both Italian and German Occupation (see map two). [84]

Apart from isolated Alpine battles with Italian troops in June 1940, the region was largely free of sustained military combat until the Allied landings of August 1944. As such, the region allows for an analysis of both the indirect and

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[82] Richard White, 'The Nationalization of Nature,' *The Journal of American History* 86/3 (1999). Accessed at http://historycooperative.press.uiuc.edu/journals/jah/86.3/white.html, 8.

[83] See, among others, John Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France: The French under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); and Robert Zaretsky, *Nîmes at War: Religion, Politics, and Public Opinion in the Gard 1938-1944* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press 1995). Kedward's *In Search of the Maquis* also stresses the importance of place.

[84] The administrative *départements* under study are the Alpes-Maritimes, Basses-Alpes (now the Alpes-de-Hautes-Provence), Bouches-du-Rhône, Drôme, Hautes-Alpes, Isère, Var, and Vaucluse. Following the defeat of France, these *départements* lay in the Unoccupied Zone. Between June 1940 and November 1942, Italy annexed the frontier area of the Alpes-Maritimes, before taking control of the whole of region in November 1942. The expanded Italian Zone lasted until September 1943, after which it was subsequently occupied by the German army. For the social and political history of this region during the war, see Jean-Marie Guillon, 'La France du Sud-Est,' in Azéma and Bédarida, *France des années noires: tome 2*, 159-76.

direct ecological ramifications of warfare. Where necessary, however, I draw on notable examples from outside this region, such as the Tronçais forest in central France. In terms of war damage, the South East suffered less than regions such as Alsace and Lorraine. However, without further research into other areas of France during the war, it is hard to say with any certainty how representative my case study is of the environmental history of the "dark years."

Uncovering the environmental history of this region necessitated consulting a wide range of sources. Perhaps the most important repository has been the archives of the French Forestry Administration (Administration des Eaux et Forêts [85]) at both a national and *départemental* level. In several cases (such as in the Var *département*), these documents have only just become available for consultation and have proved invaluable for uncovering the history of forestry policy, war damage, and the relationships between foresters and occupying forces. Unfortunately, these documents have not revealed all aspects of forest history. Not least, they are silent on why foresters drifted towards the resistance (it is, of course, unsurprising that foresters omitted mention of any clandestine activity from their official reports). [86] Other administrative records consulted at both a national and local level include those of the Chantiers de la Jeunesse youth movement and the Direction de déminage (landmine clearance service). Government reports, such as the Commission consultative des dommages et des réparations (CCDR), were vital in assessing environmental war

[85] In 1940 Pierre Caziot, Vichy Minister for Agriculture, renamed Eaux et Forêts as the Direction des Forêts, de la chasse et de la pêche (it reverted back to its previous name in 1943). For simplicity's sake, I refer to Eaux et Forêts as the Forestry Administration throughout my thesis. The administration was governed by five general administrators who oversaw the work of conservators, inspectors, and subinspectors. The day-to-day policing of forests fell to general guards and *gardes particuliers*. See Whited, *Forests and Peasant Politics in Modern France*, 31.

[86] Documents in the Haute-Alpes' *archives départementales* indicate that in the late 1940s the head of the Forestry Administration requested information on foresters' resistance activity. I was unable to locate the final result of this survey.

damage. The CCDR's final report was published in 1951 and was based on information gathered during the war, covering such areas as architectural, industrial, agricultural war damage, as well as the impact of war on forests and hunting. However, it is necessary to recognise potential problems with its findings. Not least, the accuracy of war damage statistics must be questioned given the administrative upheaval in postwar France and the difficulty in accurately assessing the extent of war damage on the ground. In 1946, a Génie Rural official recognised that it was difficult to accurately assess war damage to the countryside. [87] And, as Voldman points out, the CCDR's findings followed the 'logic of victors' seeking to reclaim what they had lost during the war. [88]

To complement my use of state sources, I have consulted wartime books on the forest, agriculture, and the Camargue, as well as various periodicals, such as the journals of the Club Alpin Français, Jeunesse et Montagne youth movement, and forestry organisations. The archives of the Société nationale d'acclimatation de France (now the Société national de la protection de la nature), cast light on the Camargue's wartime history. In addition, memoirs written by Vercors *maquisards* bring to light resistance attitudes towards the mountain environment. As I have not had the time to consult resistance memoirs from other parts of France (and in the absence of a general account of the resistance's construction of nature), I do not claim that the Vercors memoirs are necessarily representative of resisters in other mountain environments.

Another way that I have tried to capture history "from below" is through talking to those who lived through the war, including *maquisards*, foresters, and a fisherman from the Camargue. Given time constraints and the ever-dwindling

[87] CHAN F [10] 7103 Chief Engineer, Génie Rural, 'Evaluation provisoire immediate des dommages agricoles causés par la guerre,' 21 May 1946.
[88] Voldman, *Reconstruction des villes françaises*, 28.

numbers of individuals who lived during the war, oral history has not formed a major part of this work. It has, however, been helpful in gaining a sense of firsthand experiences of the past (albeit ones that are necessarily mediated by the passage of time and distortions of memory). In addition to talking to contemporaries and consulting documentation, I have visited many of the sites described in this thesis to uncover physical traces of the war on the ground and assess the creation of landscapes of memory.

My thesis is structured both chronologically and thematically. Chapter two deals with the immediate aftermath of defeat in 1940 in Vichy France, while chapters three to five explore the environmental history of the "dark years" through a focus on three different types of habitats; forests, marshes, and mountains. While there is some overlap between these habitats (for instance, many forests are located in mountainous areas), this structure shows how war affected different habitats in different ways. Chapters six and seven deal with the aftermath of the war, respectively exploring the postwar reconstruction of the environment and landscapes of memory. These last two chapters have a wider geographical and chronological focus than the four previous ones; chapter six considers environmental reconstruction throughout France between 1944 and 1955, while chapter seven analyses the relationship between nature and memory across the postwar period.

Following on from this introduction, chapter two examines how military defeat in 1940 and subsequent material shortages forced the French to fall back on the country's natural resources. Along with ideological considerations, these shortages informed the Vichy regime's war against "wasteland" and its attempt to cultivate as much French soil as possible, including land that had *never* been

cultivated. I assess the aims and ultimate failure of this cultivation drive through a focus on reforestation. This chapter highlights the material basis of the "National Revolution" and how war alters the relationship between society and the environment.

Chapter three recounts wartime forest history, examining changes to forestry policies, Vichy's political appropriation of the forest and the Forestry Administration's attempt to uphold its forestry management principles in the face of increased forest fires and the activities of occupation soldiers, as well as the resistance's reclaiming of forests from Vichy. By outlining the forest's interlocking material and cultural histories, this chapter shows how the forest was essential for the continuation of any semblance of normal life and how it became a site of political manipulation for both republican (the resistance) and anti-republican (Vichy) forces within French society.

At the same time as foresters sought to conserve French forest resources, the SNAF battled to preserve the Camargue wetlands, a site renowned for its natural beauty and scientific importance. Maintaining the integrity of its nature reserve was no easy matter for the SNAF as the Vichy regime sought to intensify agriculture and the French, German, and Allied air forces successively used the wetlands as an aerial training zone. The biggest challenge, though, came when German authorities planned to flood the Camargue for defensive purposes. The SNAF, however, was largely successful in protecting the Camargue, aided by the unpredictability of the Camargue's climate. As well as tracing the history of nature protection in wartime, this chapter highlights the inconsistencies of Vichy policies, as the regime viewed wetlands as both a site of tradition and an area ripe for agricultural modernisation.

Moving up in altitude from the flat expanses of the Camargue, chapter five outlines the mobilisation of mountains between 1940 and 1944. In the wake of defeat and restrictions placed on the French military, mountains became a substitute means for restoring and strengthening male bodies and identities through youth groups such as Jeunesse et Montagne. The rejuvenation of masculinity was portrayed as part of the *redressement* (or renewal) of France under Vichy, but the regime did not enjoy a monopoly over the mobilisation of the mountain landscape. Just as it did in the forest, the resistance began to reclaim mountain space as its own by deploying mountains as refuges and military bases. This mobilisation reached its ultimate conclusion in the Vercors, where *maquisards* revelled in their personal rejuvenation in the pure mountain air and where their leaders attempted to mould the mountain range into a supposedly impenetrable "natural fortress." This mobilisation backfired, however, when German forces invaded the fortress, massacring *maquisards* and civilians alike, and damaging the area's physical environment.

Postwar reconstruction is the main theme of chapter six, as war provided the opportunity to modernise the environment. I analyse how state officials strove to manage the continued pressures on natural resources that came from Allied troops and French civilians. The focus then shifts to removing the explosive traces of the war and returning land to productivity through landmine clearance (the ease of which varied according to the type of terrain). In the long term, the French state undertook the reconstruction of the environment along planned and productivist principles (in line with wider societal developments). This was a response to the extent of war damage, as well as long standing anxieties concerning rural depopulation and deforestation. Postwar reforestation

under the FFN scheme, however, was much more successful than that undertaken by Vichy after the defeat.

Whereas chapter six outlines the removal of war's physical traces, chapter seven analyses the preservation of memories within the natural environment and the coupling of resistance memories with forests, *maquis*, and mountain landscapes. In part, preservers of memory associate memories of resistance with these landscapes as it reflects their wartime history, but the recourse to nature is also an attempt to naturalise and enshrine memory. Furthermore, the case of the Vercors demonstrates the ways in which resistance memorials engage with their environment to re-create wartime experiences and perpetuate memories. In contrast, sites associated with shameful or humiliating aspects of the war (such as internment camps) have been allowed to slip into obscurity within the landscape. Yet, the relationship between nature and memory is far from straightforward as weather and vegetation threaten to transform sites of memory. The creation of these landscapes of memory highlights the continued mobilisation of the natural environment for human ends and nature's unpredictability, both of which are important themes within this environmental history of the "dark years."

Chapter Two

The War on "Wasteland": Remaking the French Landscape

The speed of France's military and political collapse in the summer of 1940 shocked the French. Within six weeks of invading Holland and Belgium on 10 May 1940, Hitler's armies had reached Paris, throwing France and its government into chaos. On 22 June 1940, after First World War hero Marshal Philippe Pétain had taken control of the government, an armistice was signed between France and Germany. [1] As a consequence, French territory was fragmented: Germany annexed Alsace-Lorraine, attached the Nord and Pas-de-Calais *départements* to its military command in Bruxelles, restricted access to the English Channel and Atlantic coastlines, and took control of the Northern half of France (see map 1). In the Southern or "free" zone, Pétain's authoritarian government established its base in the spa town of Vichy and pursued a policy of state collaboration with Nazi Germany.

The Vichy regime formulated a domestic agenda in reaction to France's supposed decline under the Third Republic. Trumpeting the values of *Famille, travail, patrie* ('Family, Work, Fatherland'), Vichy's "National Revolution" aimed to rejuvenate French society by encouraging a return to the allegedly "natural"

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[1] For recent work on the fall of France, see Julian Jackson, *The Fall of France: The Nazi Invasion of 1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); and Peter Jackson, 'Returning to the Fall of France: Recent Work on the Cause and Consequences of the "Strange Defeat" of 1940,' *Modern and Contemporary France* 12/4 (November 2004): 513-36.

communities of family, workplace, and region. [2] The French soil, as both a material reality and an imaginative concept, was a key component of this attempt to remake France. As prominent regionalist writer Henri Pourrat argued, the only way for France to revive itself was 'through the earth' (*sur la terre*). After military defeat, what else did France now possess other than its soil; 'here is wounded France, but on her knees and with her bloody hands, doesn't she come to touch the earth?' [3] An important component of the "National Revolution," therefore, was the promotion of "back to the land" philosophies and policies. Pétain and traditionalists within the Vichy regime intended the *retour à la terre* as a means of rediscovering "true" and "eternal" France, and as a way of rejuvenating the nation through a return to tradition and authenticity. [4] Physical vigour, moral enhancement, and a sense of the immutable, natural, hierarchical communities that supposedly formed the French nation were among the lessons the French were to glean from the soil.

Historians have outlined in detail the cultural history of the "National Revolution" and its "back to the land" rhetoric, stressing its lack of coherence and the fact that it was mainly advanced by the reactionary, traditionalist clique surrounding Pétain. In contrast, I focus here on the Vichy regime's attempt to physically transform the French landscape for both practical and ideological reasons.

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[2] As Jackson argues, 'such communities supposedly offered "real" freedoms unlike the abstract and hollow rights vaunted by liberals.' *France: The Dark Years*, 149-54. Paxton stresses that the "National Revolution" and Vichy policies arose from French initiative rather than German pressure. See *Vichy France*, 136-45.

[3] Henri Pourrat, *L'homme à la bêche, histoire du Paysan* (Paris: Flammarion, 1940), 282.

[4] As Philippe Burrin argues, for Vichy 'the defeat provided a unique opportunity to rediscover [the] bedrock [of "eternal France"], and the best way to do that was to promote a return to the soil.' 'Vichy,' in Pierre Nora (ed.), *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past. Volume 1: Conflicts and Divisions*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 194. For Muel-Dreyfus, "back to the land-ism" was an attempt to revert France to cyclical time, the time of nature and of seasons as opposed to the linear time of modernity. *Vichy and the Eternal Feminine*, 3-4, 26-31.

It is hard to ascertain which of these was more important to the regime and, in many ways, the two objectives overlapped. Cultivating more land was a way of morally rejuvenating France while providing desperately needed resources. Vichy tried to remake French society through the soil and endeavoured to remake the land itself. There was, therefore, a significant material basis to the "National Revolution" and "back to the land-ism."

Although it was never announced as such (and it is unwise to ascribe too much coherence to Vichy's political agenda and policies [5]), the Vichy regime launched a war against "wasteland." This campaign was in response to the severe material shortages post-defeat, as well as a bid to revitalize French society through transforming the landscape. Pétain and traditionalists within the regime believed that "true" France was rural France, and re-cultivating the landscape was a way of returning the country to its essential character. [6] For Vichy, "wasteland" (or *la friche*) had no place on the French landscape. It provided few natural resources or foodstuffs and was a sign of the decline of rural, peasant France under the Third Republic. In effect, Vichy aimed to cultivate all of French soil, including land that had always been uncultivated.

The strategies in the war against "wasteland" were manifold as the desire to eradicate *friche* motivated both traditionalists and technocrats within the regime. Vichy's creation of a corporatist countryside, its promotion of "back to the land"

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[5] Shennan stresses that the "National Revolution" lacked a coherent ideology, as it was expounded through twenty speeches given by Pétain which were intended to act as a stimulus for others. Andrew Shennan, *Rethinking France: Plans for Renewal 1940-1946* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 19-20 Paxton emphasis that 'Vichy was not a "bloc"' and was made up of 'competing visions.' *Vichy France*, 139.

[6] For more on rightwing constructions of "true France," see Herman Lebovics, *True France: The Wars over Cultural Identity, 1900-1945* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992).

values through propaganda, and its support of small scale farming are the most well known of its rural policies. But the regime's large scale public works to reclaim and re-cultivate land were also essential weapons in the war against "wasteland," as was reforestation, a policy widely supported by foresters who had a longstanding distaste for areas of "uncultivated" forest, such as *maquis* (their preference for mature forest over scrubland during the war was evident in forest fires reports). Ultimately, Vichy's campaign to remake the French countryside failed as the extent of "wasteland" actually increased between 1940 and 1944. Furthermore, rural resistance units invested *maquis* with a sense of national purpose, transforming it into a centre of alternative power to the Vichy regime and, as Kedward points out, offering a more subversive interpretation of "back-to-the-landism." [7]

As this chapter shows, war and occupation increased the importance of cultivated land and intensified longstanding attempts to eradicate uncultivated land. [8] Yet even an authoritarian regime like Vichy failed to increase the surface area of cultivated land, suggesting that the land was not as malleable as Vichy assumed. Ideologically and materially, Vichy's war on "wasteland" was a failure, despite an increase in market gardening.

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[7] Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, 115.

[8] For Bloch, writing in the 1930s, one of the principal features of the long-term history of the French countryside was the struggle to cultivate the land. On land clearance in the Middle ages, which Bloch describes as the 'great work of clearing waste,' see *French Rural History*, 13-16.

Chapter Two

"Back to the land-ism" in Vichy France

Vichy was not alone in its hostility towards "wasteland." In 1936, the German National Socialist party launched a "Battle for Production" to increase Germany's self-sufficiency in the event of war (motto: "Change wasteland into arable land!"). This form of "inner colonization" aimed to reclaim two million hectares of marshes and other "wasteland" and transform them into productive farmland by 1940. [9] Once war broke out in 1939, populations in other countries, such as Britain, were encouraged to "dig for victory." The material and geographical realities ushered in by military defeat in 1940 forced the French to go "back to the land" and extract the maximum amount of foodstuffs and other produce from their soil.

The main reason that France had to seek a form of autarky was not war damage caused during the fall of France, even if the landscape had not emerged unscathed from the conflict. Allied forces had flooded parts of northern France to protect their retreat at Dunkirk (a tactic which the German army reproduced in 1944 to prevent Allied landings in the area) with subsequent destruction of farmland. [10] Soldiers had also consumed natural resources. Troops stationed near the Italian frontier in the Alpes-Maritimes, for instance, used wood for heating, cooking, and constructing communication posts. [11] Such damage was relatively minor, however,

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[9] Thomas Lekan, "'It Shall Be the Whole Landscape!" The Reich Protection Law and Regional Planning in the Third Reich,' in Brüggemeier, Cioc, and Zeller, *How Green Were the Nazis?* , 92.

[10] Commission consultative des dommages et des réparations, *Dommages subis par la France et l'Union française du fait de la guerre et de l'occupation ennemie* (1939-1945) (Imprimerie Nationale, 1951), 10 vols, vol. 1, 218.

[11] See Arthur Dugelay, 'Les deboisements et les reboisements dans les Alpes-Maritimes (suite),' *Revue de la Géographie alpine* 31/2 (1943), 153. The Forestry Conservator in Lille also reported that

and it was material constraints and ideological convictions that informed Vichy's cultivation drive.

The main reason for material shortages in Vichy France was the division of the country and the severing of supply arteries. Under the terms of the armistice and the division of France into separate zones, the Unoccupied Zone lost sixty-six percent of France's cultivated land, seventy-five percent of its mining and industrial facilities, ninety-seven percent of its fish stocks, sixty-two percent of its cereals, and seventy percent of its potatoes and milk. [12] As these figures starkly demonstrate, Vichy France was cut off from the main centres of French industrial and agricultural production. Certain southern *départements*, such as the Var, where agriculture was concentrated on wine and olive oil production, faced extreme food shortages, which began to bite from the winter of 1940-41 onwards. [13] In addition, France endured a British naval blockade, depriving it of imports from its colonies and other countries. This had severe implications for the French economy, which was heavily reliant on imported goods. On the eve of World War Two, France was the world's largest importer of coal and ninety percent of wood for paper production was imported from Finland and the USSR. [14] The Germany war economy also had designs on French foodstuffs, industrial output, and natural resources. By 1944, Germany was annually

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French troops had cleared forests to build anti-tank defences and create sight lines between 1936 and 1939. CACAN 198880470/172 M. Volmerange, Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Lille, 'Possibilité par volume des Forêts Françaises,' 28 June 1947. Maginot Line defences had also entailed environmental modification, as 'long broad ride[s]' were cut through forests in order to improve the line of fire from the fortifications. Vivian Rowe, *The Great Wall of France: The Triumph of the Maginot Line* (London: Putnam, 1959), 11-12.

[12] Rod Kedward, *Resistance in Vichy France: A Study of Ideas and Motivation in the Southern Zone 1940-1942* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 18.

[13] Dominique Veillon and Jean-Marie Flonneau (eds.), *Le temps des restrictions en France (1939-1949)* (Paris: Cahiers de l'IHTP nos. 32-33, May 1996), 12-16.

[14] Alan S. Milward, *The New Order and the French Economy* (Aldershot: Gregg Revivals, 1993 [1984]), 34; and 'Les forêts et la guerre: exposé fait à l'Académie d'Agriculture le 20 Décembre 1939 par M. J. Jagerschmidt,' *L'Action Forestière et Pisicole*, No. 33, December 1939, 1.

seizing six to eight million quintals of grain, drinking two to three million hectolitres of French wine, and consuming 135,000 to 270,000 tons of meat (for Germany's requisition of French timber resources see chapter three).[15]

In response to these material shortages, Vichy France attempted to maximise available natural resources and cultivate as much of its territory as possible. As a consequence, land deemed unproductive came under attack. A booklet produced by the Ministry of Agriculture led the assault, boldly stating that 'it is no longer permitted to leave any parcel of land uncultivated'. [16] Pétain himself claimed that each newly cultivated area of "wasteland" 'will become a new source of riches for our country which is currently deprived, due to the defeat, of its natural resources.' [17] In another speech he urged that 'it is necessary that [farmers] take as much from the earth as she can give. All fallow land must be re-cultivated, even if the soil is barren. Yields must be increased despite all the difficulties.'[18] In post-defeat France, the government called on the land to provide more.

As well as presenting a severe challenge for the regime and society, the material conditions in post-defeat France represented an opportunity to remake the landscape. Defeat provided the chance not only to make existing farmland more productive but to cultivate land that had *never* been cultivated. Celebrated etymologist Albert Dauzat's *Le village et le paysan de France* (1941) argued that now was the time to 'go further and finish the exploitation (*mise en valeur*) of all

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[15] Paxton, *Vichy France*, 143-44. On France's incorporation and contribution to the German war economy, see Milward, *New Order and the French Economy*.

[16] Ministère de l'Agriculture, Édition de Sécrétariat Général à l'Information et à la propagande, *Agriculteurs, voici ce qu'en un an le gouvernement du Maréchal a fait pour vous* [n.d.], 29.

[17] Jean Thouvenin, *D'ordre du Maréchal Pétain: documents officiels réunis et commentés* (Paris: Sequana, 1940), 29.

[18] Quoted in Jean-Claude Barbas (ed.), *Phillippe Pétain: discours aux Français 17 juin 1940- 20 août 1944* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1989), 107.

cultivatable soil.' Long-abandoned soil or land that had never been cultivated should now be developed. According to Dauzat, only rocky land was unsuitable for cultivation and all other habitats could be successfully transformed into productive land. Marshes could be drained and the vast scrubland of the Massif Central (which 'serves no purpose apart from hunting') replaced with rye crops, pine and silver birch forests, or pastures. Elsewhere, sheep could graze on underused heathland enabling France to become an exporter of wool. [19] Dauzat's vision was one of unrelenting cultivation, with only clusters of rocks breaking up France's fertile fields and forests. It is hard to determine how much direct influence ideas such as Dauzat's exerted on government policy. Nonetheless, it is clear that they helped to legitimise Vichy's war on "wasteland."

Beyond the need for greater food production, however, other meanings were associated with the cultivation of French soil. The Vichy regime promoted a "back to the land" movement as a way of restoring French society. The *retour à la terre* was designed to lead to individual and national renewal, as being close to the land supposedly produced healthier bodies and minds, far removed from the vices of the city (for the specific case of forests and youth groups see chapter three and for mountains see chapter six). In the words of the Minister for Peasant Restoration (*Restauration Paysanne*), working the land would 'give a taste for work and healthy country traditions to young people who have been as deeply marked by living in the cities as adults.' [20]

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[19] Albert Dauzat, *Le village et le paysan de France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1941), 210-11.
[20] Quoted in Pierre Bernard, 'La mission de restauration paysanne au service de la terre par l'apprentissage agricole de la jeunesse,' *Le Petit Marseillais*, 10 February 1942, located in ADBDR 188 W 19.

This, however, was not the first time in French history that contact with nature had been advanced as a healthier alternative to urban life and modernity. In fact, Vichy both tapped into and expanded the ruralist critique of modernity and industrialisation that had emerged between the world wars. [21] Charles Rearick highlights how youth movements in interwar France promoted hiking, cycling, and camping as an antidote to urban life and a way for young people to experience freedom, adventure, and camaraderie. [22] Foresters and tourist operators also stressed nature's redemptive qualities, one arguing that 'to bring the city dweller back to the open air, this uprooted person often intoxicated by the vitiated atmosphere and sophisms of a totally debilitating milieu, to put him back in immediate contact with the soil, the love of which remains so profoundly anchored to the heart of the peasant, is a work of public health and social pacification.' [23] The difference in Vichy France was that the government made a concerted effort to convert such ideas into state ideology and policy. [24]

Yet Vichy did not enjoy a monopoly over "back to the land" ideas. The Jewish youth movement Éclaireurs israélietes de France (EIF) declared a *retour à la terre* for its members in the summer of 1940, at which time its leaders instructed their followers to 'cultivate the earth, sow and harvest, plant trees, and gather fruits.'

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[21] See Romy Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France between the Wars* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995). I return to these critiques in chapter four.

[22] Charles Rearick, *The French in Love and War: Popular Culture in the Era of the World Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 154-71. Similar movements arose elsewhere in Europe. For the case of Germany, see Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature*, 130-38.

[23] Tourist operator quoted in Rearick, *French in Love and War*, 157. See also J. Demorlaine, 'La rénovation du tourisme: son influence sur la forêt,' *Revue des Eaux et Forêts* 77/10 (October 1939): 846-48.

[24] The regime even exported its "back to the land" philosophy to France's colonies. See Eric T. Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics: Pétain's National Revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Indochina, 1940-1944* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 108-9.

[25] The EIF, which was founded in 1923, had identified rural life and the cultivation of "wasteland" as a means of renewing minds, bodies, and spirits to create the next generation of Jewish leaders, even if, according to Lucien Lazare, it 'adopted its vocabulary' to fit with the post-1940 "back to the land" atmosphere in France. [26] However, in other ways, the EIF's views clashed with those of Vichy, as there was a religious, sometimes Zionist, thread running through its work; one of EIF's leaders, Leo Cohn, saw the organisation's aims as 'the dual ideal of the return of Jews to the earth and the return of Judaism to Jews.' [27]

During a period when Nazi and Vichy anti-Semitism thrived, working the land in remote corners of the French countryside provided a much-needed place of refuge. As the EIF leaders argued, the '"return to the soil, which has been desirable for many years, has now become a necessity. A very large number of workers and intellectuals will no longer have any possibility of living. The problem is particularly acute for the Jewish youth of France, following the elimination by the Germans of the Jews from Alsace and the East.' [28]

In a parallel movement, artists who faced persecution from Vichy and German authorities discovered the benefits of going "back to the land" as they lay low in the French countryside. [29] Nor was a "back to the land" philosophy inherently reactionary. As Jackie Clarke highlights, members of the rationalization movement

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[25] Amy Latour, *La résistance juive en France 1940-1944* (Paris: Stock, 1970), 30.
[26] Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, 61-2. See also Alain Michel, 'Les Éclaireurs israélites de France dans la Tarn,' in Jacques Fijalkow (ed.), *Vichy, les Juifs et les justes: l'exemple du Tarn* (Toulouse: Éditions Privat, 2003), 163-77.
[27] Quoted in Michel, 'Éclaireurs israélites de France,' 168. The movement's leaders compared their communities to kibbutz in Palestine and the ancient Jewish tradition of working the land. See Latour, *Résistance juive en France*, 30.
[28] Quoted in Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, 62.
[29] Cone describes this as an 'uncanny return to the soil.' See *Artists under Vichy*, 89-115.

working within Vichy France, such as Paulette Bernège, recommended a "return to the land" so that society could evolve towards more rational forms of social organisation. [30]

Under Vichy, however, the main form of "back to the land" discourse centred on a reactionary celebration of the French peasant. It is important to note, however, that there was nothing inherent about the right-wing appropriation of peasants. For although the peasantry had been courted by Henri Dorgères' fascist party Défense Paysanne (which portrayed itself as the protector of peasants and their values), left-wing politicians had also wooed rural France in the 1930s. [31] Not least, Shanny Peer demonstrates how the Popular Front appropriated rural values and identities and incorporated them into its progressive vision. [32] Vichy's praise of the peasant erased such progressive interpretations of the peasant to construct an "eternal" French identity that was rooted in the soil. In addition, the "National Revolution's" peasant rhetoric gave ideological credence to the regime's cultivation drive.

For Pétain and other Vichy traditionalists, cultivating France through the efforts of the peasantry represented a way of restoring the nation's true "rural" identity and the source of its strength. According to Pétain, France was an

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[30] See Clarke, 'Homecomings,' 171-82.

[31] For more on Dorgères' movement see Paxton, *French Peasant Fascism*.

[32] One left-wing argument held that France's rural character enabled the nation to modernise *à la française* and meant that the country could reap the benefits of modernity, while retaining its rural and artisan traditions. See Shanny Peer, *France on Display: Peasants, Provincials and Folklore in the 1937 Paris World's Fair* (Albany: New York Press, 1998), especially 3-4, 53. Brett Bowles also shows how communists and socialists in the 1930s appropriated the ruralism of Marcel Pagnol's films in 'Politicizing Pagnol: Rural France, Film, and Ideology under the Popular Front,' *French History* 19/1 (March 2005): 112-42. For a wider consideration of political ideology and rural identity see H. R. Kedward, 'Contemplating French Roots,' in Cornick and Crossley, *Problems in French History*, 233-48.

'essentially agricultural nation,' and ensuring its renewal meant restoring the peasantry, the section of society that was closer to the land. [33] This view was shared by others. For Charles Cornu, France was great before she became an industrial nation. The country 'grew by the application of the peasantry, inspired by the... concern of every French peasant [to] enlarge his patrimony.' Vichy was therefore right to encourage the 'tradition of the earth.' [34] According to agricultural commentator Marcel Braibant, Pétain was correct to declare a 'halt, or even a reversal, to the path of excessive industrialisation' as France simply couldn't compete with other nations more favourably endowed in terms of population and natural resources. France would fare best playing to her strengths and developing an economy centred on agriculture; 'all our energies must therefore strain towards a turnaround (*redressement*) of our destiny through the development and the intensification of the nation's agriculture.' [35]

"Back to the land" rhetoric portrayed the soil as representing authenticity in opposition to the city, a supposed hotbed of corruption, immorality, unfettered individualism, and class conflict. As Pétain famously remarked in a speech on 25 June 1940, 'the earth doesn't lie.' [36] Philosopher Gustave Thibon, known for his Catholic, monarchist, and pro-peasant views, took up this theme in *Retour au réel*, arguing that the 'earth doesn't make vain promises.' Instead, she simply produces 'humble goods [i.e. cereals, fruits, and vegetables]...which merge with men's flesh

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[33] Quoted in Marcel Braibant, *La France, Nation Agricole: Regards sur le passé, Perspectives d'avenir* (Paris: Les Documents Contemporains, 1943), 15.
[34] ADBDR 188 W 19 Charles Cornu, 'L'aventure agricole,' extract from *Deux Mondes*, 1 February 1941 (Clermont-Ferrand: Imprimerie Moderne, 1941), 3.
[35] Braibant, *La France, Nation Agricole*, 15-17.
[36] Quoted in Noël d'Ornans, *Les Jeudis du Maréchal* (Paris: Éditions de la G.P. 1943), 30. Nicolas Atkin highlights the ironic fact that Parisian intellectual Emmanuel Berl came up with the phrase. *Pétain* (London: Longman, 1998), 103.

and blood.' For Thibon, the peasant himself merged with the land. Knowing what to plant according to the seasons produced a 'sort of symbiosis between the earth and man.' Life on the soil 'constantly reminded [peasants] of nature's order,' making them socially and biologically superior to townspeople. Moreover, nature's rules were tamperproof and acted as a test for the human character. It was impossible for humans to fool the earth; 'you plant cabbages' and when those cabbages arrive they are 'the reality against which you are judged, without appeal.' [37]

Conflict was absent from this view of nature, which, in turn, shaped the peasantry. According to Joseph de Pesquidoux, a regionalist poet and member of the Académie française, this was shown in the way peasant generations succeed one another. As the father passes away, the son takes stewardship of the land and 'life begins again without interruption... along the rhythm of the seasons, this rhythm of nature in which the seed splits only in order to germinate.' [38] As these comments show, "back to the land" rhetoric made the peasant part of nature and, as Christian Faure argues, they took on 'affective and moral' meanings along with other material realities such as 'the earth, wood, iron or stone.' [39]

It is unclear how far "back to the land" rhetoric spread beyond ruralists like Thibon and de Pesquidoux. Nonetheless, re-establishing the privileged place of the peasant within French society was a pressing task for Pétain, traditionalists within the regime, and their supporters. In their view, the Third Republic had overseen a

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[37] Gustave Thibon, *Retour au réel: nouveaux diagnositics* (Lyon: H Lardanchet, 1943), 5, 31.
[38] Joesph de Pesquidoux, *Pour la Terre* (Toulouse: Éditions du Clocher, 1942), 28.
[39] Faure, *Projet culturel de Vichy*, 124. Such rhetoric also served to symbolically exclude Jews from the landscape and justify their subsequent internment and deportation. As Lawrence D. Kritzman argues, 'the figure of the Jew represented the *anti-producteur*, the urban monied individual, the antithesis of the noble French peasant whose rural existence was idealized for its settled life, rooted in the values of the earth.' 'Introduction: In the Shadows of Auschwitz, Culture, Memories, and Self-Reflection,' in Kritzman, *Auschwitz and After*, 2.

decline in peasant farming, thus exacerbating the *exode rural* (long-term internal migration from the countryside to the city). [40] De Pesquidoux lamented the 'crazy law' of the forty-hour working week which encouraged young people from the countryside to 'desert the soil' for the secure wages of industrial labour and the 'liberty and pleasure' of the city. [41] For him, and others, this was indicative of how France had turned its back on the countryside. According to this view, national decline was the inevitable result which had directly contributed to the defeat. [42]

Peasants were to be the foot soldiers in the war against "wasteland," ensuring the cultivation of French soil and, by extension, the renewal of France.[43] Images that appeared as part of the National Revolution's propaganda portrayed the peasant as an in-defatigable warrior bent on cultivating the soil and producing the food that was so desperately needed to fill French stomachs. One, produced by the Corporation paysanne shows a peasant stranding firm, clasping his pitch fork as though it were a weapon. [44]

The land itself would supposedly help then in this task. Vichy posited that the peasants had gleaned wisdom and strength from the soil. According to de

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[40] Between 1911 and 1925 three million hectares of cultivated land were abandoned. Vergeot et Aubé, *Rapport sur le problème agricole français: données et solutions* (Paris: 1944).

[41] De Pesquidoux, *Pour la Terre*, 14.

[42] Marc Bloch, historian, army veteran, and resister, argued the opposite. He contended that before the war the French had sunk into a 'soft atmosphere of lethargy,' wallowing in their charming rural past, and were more interested in clinging onto their heritage than building a modern nation. France's refusal to move with the times meant that everything was now lost; 'the donkey-cart may be a friendly and a charming means of transport, but if we refuse to replace it by the motorcar, where the motorcar is desirable, we shall find ourselves stripped of everything – including the donkey.' Marc Bloch, *Strange Defeat: A Statement of Evidence Written in 1940.* Trans. Gerard Hopkins (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), 37, 149.

[43] The modern myth of the stoic and hardy peasant fighting for France on either farmland or battlefield dates back to at least the Napoleonic Wars. See de Puymège, 'The Good Soldier Chauvin,' 332-60.

[44] *Images de la France de Vichy 1940-1944: images asservies et images rebelles* (Paris: La Documentation française, 1988), 39.

Pesquidoux, even when nature was cruel, such as when storms threatened the harvest, she taught the peasant the importance of tenacity and a deep-rooted acceptance of the natural order. Nature nourished, protected, tested, and educated the peasant, fashioning him into the eternal guarantor of the survival of the French 'race' and 'people.' [45]

Just as the tenacious peasant-soldier had saved France during the battle of Verdun during the First World War, Vichy traditionalists argued that the peasant was now one of the foundations of France's renewal after the defeat. As Pierre Caziot, Minister for Agriculture until April 1942, informed the peasants, 'in the immense task of national recovery... the part that falls on you is the largest and heaviest.' [46] Vichy ideology sought to galvanise the peasantry in its mission of national renewal. Government literature claimed that Pétain and Caziot had launched their agricultural and "back to the land" policies because they 'wanted to clear away the ruins and lay new foundations in order to rebuild on a solid base. It was more than a restoration. It was a revolution, or at least a renovation.' They aimed, the passage continued, to restore the peasant to his 'true place in French society' and return agriculture to its 'former strength.' [47] But rhetoric alone could not ensure the cultivation of France, and Vichy introduced practical measures so that its "back to the land" ideology would be matched by changes on the land.

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[45] De Pesquidoux, *Pour la terre*, 23-26.

[46] Pierre Caziot, 'Après l'orage...' in *Agriculteurs, voici ce qu'en un an le gouvernement du Maréchal a fait pour vous*, 5. Caziot, an agricultural economist before the war, who claimed that his family farm stretched back five or six centuries, had long favoured and supported family farms as the basis of the rural economy. See Paxton, *Vichy France*, 204.

[47] *La terre de France attend ses paysans prisonniers de guerre: renseignements et conseils* (Paris: Ministre de l'Agriculture, 1942), 26.

Chapter Two

Cultivating France

"Back to the land" rhetoric was accompanied by laws designed to encourage cultivation. The law of 27 August 1940 prescribed an inventory of all land that had been abandoned for more than two years and allowed individuals and families to take charge of the vacant land to re-cultivate the soil. The law recognised that it was 'more difficult' to re-cultivate abandoned soil than it was to farm land in 'a normal state of production.' So those wanting to become cultivators had to prove their competence and technical knowledge. Ideally, they should have already worked the land, either on their own farms or those of their parents, as well as being of French nationality and holding full civic and political rights. [48] However, not just anyone could take charge of a piece of French soil. In order to establish the good character of would-be cultivators, Prefects asked gendarmes to conduct 'investigations of morality' into their nationality, family background, knowledge of agriculture, and financial situation. [49] Their "morality" established, the beneficiaries of the law enjoyed a nine-year concession of the land, of which the first three years were rent free, as well as access to low interest loans. [50]

The cultivation imperative took precedence over property rights and if a landowner refused to concede abandoned land the Prefect could hand it over to a concessionary by decree. In the words of Caziot, 'the general interest of the country dominates. Abandoned land must be re-cultivated, even against the wishes of its

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[48] ADBDR 188 W 39 Ministère de l'Agriculture, Direction de la Production agricole et des Échanges, Service de la main-d'oeuvre agricole, 'Dispositions concernant les cultivateurs or anciens cultivateurs,' 7 November 1940, 1-2.
[49] See various gendarme reports in ADV 14 M 35/3.
[50] 'Dispositions concernant les cultivateurs or anciens cultivateurs,' 2-3.

owners.'[51] The law did open up new possibilities to re-cultivate land. To take one example, the Director of Agricultural Services in the Bouches-du-Rhône evoked it to press for the removal of 200 hectares of 'wood and *garrigue*' at Les Milles, near Aix-en-Provence, to render the land farmable.[52]

The law, alongside other measures that Caziot introduced (such as making it easier to obtain credit to rebuild farmhouses), reflected his long standing support for small scale family farming. But other visions for agriculture, in particular corporatism, had gained strength during the economic depression of the 1930s. The influence of interwar corporatists, such as Jacques Le Roy-Ladurie (who became Minister for Agriculture in April 1942) and Louis Salleron, resulted in the creation of the Peasant Charter (*Charte paysanne*) and Peasant Corporation (*Corporation paysanne*) on 2 December 1940 with the aim of establishing and overseeing agricultural self-regulation within a controlled market. [53] For Vichy, a major attraction of the corporatist model lay in the fact that it supposedly combated individualism and class antagonisms (thereby ensuring social order), as well as apparently supporting peasants as they battled to cultivate France. [54]

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[51] ADBDR 188 W 39 Pierre Caziot to Prefects, 'Concession d'exploitations abandonnées,' 6 December 1940, 1.

[52] ADBDR 188 W 39 Directeur des Services Agricoles des Bouches-du-Rhône to Préfet des Bouches-du-Rhône, 'Terres abandonées, Domaine de la Tour d'Arbois,' 11 November 1940.

[53] Paxton, *Vichy France*, 204-9. The Corporation claimed to protect the interests of the peasantry and shield it from the exploitation and dominance of 'high finance.' Commission nationale d'organisation paysanne, Délégation générale à la propagande, 'Le Maréchal, les paysans, la corporation,' quoted in Boussard, *Vichy et la corporation paysanne*, 85-86. For an overview of peasant organisations in twentieth century France see M. C. Cleary, *Peasants, Politicians, and Producers: The Organisation of Agriculture in France since 1918* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[54] The corporatist model was introduced into other areas of rural life, with the aims of increasing production and combating individualism. The law of 28 June 1941 reorganised hunting along corporatist lines because 'game is part of the country's wealth which hunters themselves must develop through collective effort' (according to a report submitted to Pétain). ADV 1790 W 56, 'Rapport au Maréchal de France, Chef de l'État Français,' extract from *Journal Officiel*, 30 July

As well as the peasantry, youth groups were to undertake the cultivation of the land, a development that echoed the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930s as part of President Roosevelt's New Deal for the United States. [55] The Compagnons de France, created in July 1940 by Henri Dhavernas, an Inspector of Finances, aimed to 'contribute to the material and moral reconstruction of the nation.' One of the ways in which the Compagnons' leadership sought to realise this aim was by sending its recruits to work on the land, including forestry work and land reclamation. [56]

The Chantiers de la Jeunesse was another youth group that used outdoor work as a form of moral and material rejuvenation. Created by General de la Porte du Theil to avert a collapse of public order during the demobilisation of demoralised soldiers after defeat and to indoctrinate French youth with the values of honour, patriotism, and self-sacrifice, the Chantiers grouped together young men who would otherwise have been conscripted into the army for an eight-month *stage* in rural camps. The recruits were to work for the 'reconstruction of the country [and] their own virile formation through a healthy and joyous life in contact with nature.' In all, 100,000 recruits passed through the forty-three Chantiers camps in France and Algeria between 1940 and 1943. [57] De la Porte du Theil claimed that through

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1941, 'Lois no. 2673: loi du 28 June 1941 relative à l'organisation de la Chasse.' Chapter Three outlines the corporatist structure that was introduced for the forestry sector.

[55] The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) sent over three million young men into the countryside to carry out conservation work, transforming the landscape and the recruit's bodies in the process. As Neil Maher argues, both the CCC's leaders and its members believed that outdoor, manual labour strengthened their bodies and rehabilitated their masculine identities. Neil M. Maher, 'A New Deal Body Politic: Landscape, Labor, and the Civilian Conservation Corps, *Environmental History* 7/3 (July 2002): 411-34.

[56] See Halls, *Youth of Vichy France*, 267-8.

[57] ADI 21 J 58 [n.a.] 'Chantiers de jeunesse' [n.d.]. The figure of 100,000 is from Robert O. Paxton, *Parades and Politics at Vichy: The French Officer Corps under Marshall Pétain* (Princeton NJ:

removing young men from the 'city's deleterious influence' and occupying them with 'works in the general interest' he would transform the most able into leaders and the rest into 'healthy, honest men.' All would share the same patriotic faith in France. [58] As W.D. Halls argues, de la Porte du Theil had a firm conviction that 'an outdoor life, where both at work and play the body was exposed to the elements, elevated man spiritually.' [59]

In certain places the Chantiers lent a hand to farmers, while in others, they carried out their own cultivation work. [60] To take one example of the latter, the Chantiers leadership approved plans to *défricher* (clear) Île Levant, an island off the Provencal coast, as its 're-cultivation will constitute a very striking work, worthy of the Chantiers de la Jeunesse [as it will have] a truly spectacular character.' [61] A Chantiers press release praised the work of such 'pioneers,' as they cultivated abandoned islands and cleared copses and scrubland 'where for generations no-one had laid a hand.' Elsewhere, the press release continued, Chantiers recruits cleared away heather and brambles that had claimed previously cultivated fields and drained marshes to restore long-lost 'fertility' to the land. According to the press release, these young men knew that restoring France's landscape was a long-term task but one that was urgent and contributed to the 'material resurrection of a ruined

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Princeton University Press, 1966), 205. The Chantiers fell under the authority of Vichy's Secretary of State for Youth Affairs, but essentially remained in 'military hands,' according to Paxton. I consider the Chantiers' forestry work in chapter three.

[58] CHAN AJ [39] 177 Général de la Porte du Theil, *Les Chantiers de Jeunesse* (Ministre de l'Information [n.d.]), 6-8.

[59] Halls, *Youth of Vichy France*, 190-1.

[60] For the aid to farmers, see Roger Austin, 'The Chantiers de la Jeunesse in Languedoc 1940-1944' *French Historical Studies* 13/1 (Spring 1983), 112.

[61] CHAN AJ [39] 166 Mouery, Commissaire Général Adjoint, for Général de la Porte du Theil, 'Note pour Messieurs les Commissaires Régionaux, 5 August 1941, 1-2.

country.' [62] Elsewhere, Chantiers groups rebuilt farms, installed drainage works and restored land to pasture. [63] In all, between November 1941 and November 1942 the Chantiers reportedly cultivated 1,800 hectares of uncultivated land.[64]

Between 1940 and 1942, Vichy was prepared to tolerate French Jews cultivating the land. By 1942, the Éclaireurs israélietes de France was running seven farms over 226 hectares. Their agricultural activity was supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, which from May 1941 provided salaries for three leaders at each centre, allowances for recruits under twenty years of age (and 'exclusively of French nationality'), as well as clothing and equipment. [65] Individual state officials were also supportive, such as the one who visited the EIF group at Charry (Tarn-et-Garonne). Charry's leader, Issac Pougatch, described the struggle to clear and cultivate fifty-nine acres of "wasteland" as a 'war' which the EIF were happy to wage:

> To labour!... [That is] the dream of our men. What is ordinary for each peasant's son represents the ideal of these young Jews bent on re-conquering the soil. Whilst the girls, dazzled by the castle, imagine its future improvement, the men are in love with the soil of Charry. The harder, the bumpier, the more clayey [it is], the more it motivates them. Cultivate! To be cultivators! To transform this waste into a field of wheat! [66]

According to Pougatch, these young Jewish men and women saw the land as if through the 'eyes of a peasant' and they managed eventually to clear ten acres and

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[62] CHAN AJ [39] 1 'Bulletin de presse du secretariat général de la jeunesse,' 4 March 1941, 1-2.
[63] CHAN AJ [39] 1 'Les Chantiers de la Jeunesse' [n.d.].
[64] CHAN AJ [39] 1 'Contribution à la chronologie des Chantiers de jeunesse' [n.d.], 39.
[65] Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance*, 60.
[66] Issac Pougatch, *Charry: vie d'une communauté* (Neuchâtel: Éditions de la Baconnière, 1946), 14.

create a pasture for cows (Charry was also reputed to produce the best wheat in the area). When a government official arrived to requisition what he thought was a wasteland, he was reportedly so pleased with the EIF's work that rather than taking their land he offered to assist their agricultural labours. [67] In the end, however, as its anti-Jewish persecution strengthened, the Vichy regime was no longer prepared to tolerate the EIF, forcing the communities to disband and go underground (in October 1943 the EIF's leadership issued an order for the movement to go underground, although some groups had already taken to the *maquis*). [68]

The war against "wasteland" was also conducted in the urban landscape. Despite its apathy for urban areas (in rhetorical terms at least), the Vichy regime extended its cultivation drive into France's cities and government propaganda urged city-dwellers to turn their gardens into vegetable patches: 'every garden must contribute to the prosperity of the country. Do your bit for the national effort. Produce plenty. Sow good grains.' [69] The law of 18 August 1940 decreed that all available urban land be used for gardening, while the law of 25 November 1940 added a financial incentive, providing a 150 Franc payment for gardens created between November 1940 and April 1941. *Le Petit Provençal* newspaper supported the government's plans for urban agriculture, organising competitions for workers' gardens and printing images of the successful urban gardeners on its front page. [70] Vichy heralded its own success in this field and claimed that urban gardeners had

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[67] Ibid, 15-19; Latour, *Résistance juive en France*, 32. In general, Lazare notes that peasants were surprised by the quality of the EIF's produce, given the difficult land they worked on. *Rescue as Resistance*, 60.
[68] Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, 284; Michel, 'Éclaireurs israélites de France,' 173; and Pougatch, *Charry*, 187.
[69] Quoted in Veillon, *Vivre et Survivre en France*, 171.
[70] *Le Petit Provençal*, 2 June 1942, 1.

cultivated 45,000 hectares and that the number of urban gardens had risen from 487,000 to 732,000. These urban gardens, Vichy insisted, constituted a 'work of huge social significance.'[71] As well as encouraging individuals and groups to cultivate the soil, the Vichy regime launched a programme of large-scale public works intended to cultivate hitherto uncultivated land. [72]

Les grands travaux: draining marshes and replanting forests

Vichy identified marshes as wasteland ripe for cultivation. [73] The government announced its intentions to drain and cultivate marshlands in the Limagne area of the Auvergne, at Saintonge in the Charente-Maritime *département*, and in the Vendée (for the Camargue see chapter four). [74] The Albens wetlands in the Savoie département were also targeted. The draining of Albens had got underway in the eighteenth century but (according to Josette Reynaud in the *Revue de la Géographie alpine)* it took the defeat of 1940 and the need for cultivated land to spur on the work. The draining of Albens had three aims; to provide work for the unemployed, increase cultivated land by 800 hectares, and purify ('*assainer*') the local climate (for Reynaud it was 'beyond doubt that once the swamp has disappeared the fog that is so harmful to delicate crops... will substantially diminish

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[71] *Agriculteurs, voici ce qu'en un an le gouvernement du Maréchal a fait pour vous*, 29.
[72] The regime also attempted to cultivate land through large-scale public works in the French colony of Indochina. See David Biggs, 'Managing a Rebel Landscape: Conservation, Pioneers, and the Revolutionary Past in the U Minh Forest, Vietnam,' *Environmental History* 10/3 (July 2005), accessed through www.historycooperative.org, 12.
[73] A similar development occurred in Nazi Germany. As Blackbourn notes, the efforts of the Reich Labour Service during the Battle for Production led to the draining of wetlands, such as the Oldenburg high moors. *Conquest of Nature*, 271.
[74] *Agriculteurs, voici ce qu'en un an le gouvernement du Maréchal a fait pour vous*, 34.

or disappear'). By 1943, the state had overseen the redirection of the Deisse River and begun draining the marshland, allowing for the planting of vegetable crops (with mixed results). [75]

Government planners also turned their attention to the Crau, a 600km^2 rocky plain situated between the towns of Istres and Arles in the Bouches-du-Rhône. Writing in 1927, British economist and writer Hugh Quigley described the area, which was created by rocks and pebbles deposited from the Alps, as 'a wilderness of marshes whitened with salt from stagnant lagoons, burned by the sun, a mosaic of bleached pebbles where the water had receded.' For Quigley, the Crau was 'untamable,' a 'land of mystery and even repulsion,' although the sunrises and sunsets sometimes displayed 'a sublimity beyond the power of a dream.' [76] Government planners had little time for such romantic views of the Crau's wildness and re-imagined it as a fertile, agricultural plain, setting out to develop 35,000 'sterile' hectares through irrigation works. The Compagnie Nationale du Rhône (CNR) was to carry out the work, under the auspices of Génie rural officials. In a related project, the government envisaged draining water from the Vaccarès in the Camargue, as well as using water from the Rhône to irrigate sections of the Gard *département*. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, these projects bore witness to its 'incessant efforts to recuperate (*récupérer*) the maximum possible of cultivable land.' [77] And although *Le Petit Provençal* newspaper recognised the obstacles the project faced and the likelihood that only 12,000 hectares would be cultivated before

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[75] Joesette Reynaud, 'Actualité: le dessèchement des marais d'Albens (Savoie),' *Revue de la Géographie alpine* 32/3 (1944), 501-4.
[76] Hugh Quigley, *The Land of the Rhone: Lyons and Provence* (London: Methuen & Co., 1927), 12-13.
[77] *Agriculteurs, voici ce qu'en un an le gouvernement du Maréchal a fait pour vous*, 31-34.

1947, it welcomed the government's effort to turn the 'desert' into a 'fertile plain' that would serve the 'common good.' [78]

However, there was local opposition to the plans for the Crau. The Under-Prefect of Arles questioned the project's value, particularly as it directed resources and manpower away from up-and-running agricultural concerns. He argued that the project was a matter of 'long-term speculation' and:

> It would be mad to demote to second place our preoccupations with land that is currently exploited and where the yields are both immediate and sure in order to consecrate all our available resources on projects that are undoubtedly grandiose but from which we will not see the results for at least five or six years, assuming all goes well. Famine will seize us by the throat from next winter onwards, if we don't produce [enough food] beforehand. [79]

The Under-Prefect's hostility to the CNR's development of the Crau highlights that within the Vichy regime there co-existed different strategies for the best way to cultivate and organise the French countryside. Caziot favoured small-scale farming, Le Roy-Ladurie corporatist structures, while others supported a centrally-planned agricultural policy. However, the guiding principle of the necessity to cultivate remained unquestioned.

Another large-scale project undertaken by Vichy was reforestation. In certain places, only reforestation could make land productive and Vichy legislated in its favour. As I show in chapter three, there was an increased demand for timber

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[78] 'La fertilisation de la Crau,' *Le Petit Provençal*, 26 June 1942, 1.

[79] ADBDR 188 W 19, Under-Prefect of Arles to Regional Prefect, Marseille, 22 April 1942. After the war, his successor again challenged the 'industrial methods and concepts' of the CNR's plans for the Crau, calling for a development inspired by the 'experience of the people of the Crau.' ADBDR 150 W 187, Under-Prefect of Arles to Prefect of Bouches-du-Rhône, 16 January 1945, 7-8.

products and firewood in Vichy France, which forestry production struggled to meet. As a consequence, the Ministry for Agriculture called for 'an extension of the forested area of our country.' The level of forestation must be increased 'as quickly as possible.' [80] The government introduced practical measures with this aim in mind. establishing a Comité Central de Reboisement (Central Committee for Reforestation) in May 1941, while the Forestry Administration developed a programme of *grands trauvaux* reportedly worth 350 million francs in 1941 (200 million francs were to be spent in state forests and 150 million francs to restore land and reforest in mountainous areas). Specific projects were also identified. Plans were afoot to 'cultivate' ('*mise en valeur*') several thousand hectares of uncultivated land at Montgane Noire in the Haut-Languedoc through the establishment of plantations. Reforestation was also to 'regularise the water regime' of the Argout, Hérault, Orb, and Aude rivers which 'periodically' flooded the plains.[81]

Moreover, the law of 21 January 1942 elevated reforestation to 'a work of general interest' ('*travaux d'intérêt général*') and made reforestation obligatory in zones determined by ministerial decree. [82] In the same month, commissions at the communal level assumed powers to decide which uncultivated land was only suitable for reforestation. This established, the commissions could instruct landowners to establish reforestation plantations, otherwise the state would take over the land and oversee reforestation. Arthur Dugelay, Forestry Inspector in Nice, welcomed such legislation. For despite his 'very keen desire' that abandoned land be returned to its original cultivated (i.e. farmed) state he doubted whether this was

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[80] *Agriculteurs, voici ce qu'en un an le government du Maréchal a fait pour vous*, 34.
[81] Ibid. 35.
[82] *Les Eaux et Forêts du 12e au 20e siècle* (Paris: CNRS, 1987), 631.

possible in the Alpes-Maritimes given the 'number, location, isolation, and dispersion' of the parcels of uncultivated land. Therefore, for much of this land. reforestation would become obligatory under the new law. This was a relief for Dugelay, as he found 'nothing more distressing than the sight of land that has been uncultivated and unproductive for so many years.' [83]

Just as they were drafted in to cultivate France's fields, the Chantiers de la Jeunesse were to take on much of the burden of replanting France's forests. As Pétain personally informed Chantiers recruits; 'we must reforest, we must rebuild.' [84] Their reforestation labours including restoration work after forest fires in the Luberon hills in Provence where the Chantiers' 'immense and methodical work' and their planting of over 500,000 pine trees breathed new life into the 'sorry mass of stones and dry grass' (according to a press release). Elsewhere, Chantiers groups worked on reforestation plantations near Montpellier, where they had acquired 13,000 hectares to reforest. [85] But it was not just the higher echelons of the French state, such as Pétain, who identified the need to reforest, as Vichy's reforestation drive dovetailed with long-standing concerns of forestry officials, who joined the battle against uncultivated land.

Foresters versus *maquis*

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[83] Dugelay, 'Les deboisements et les reboisements dans les Alpes-Maritimes,' 164.
[84] CHAN AJ [39] 56 *Bulletin périodique officiel des Chantiers de la Jeunesse*, no. 89, 30 April 1942, 1-10.
[85] 'Bulletin du presse du secrétariat general de la jeunesse'; and CHAN AJ [39] 166 Joubert, Conservateur des Eaux et forêts, Montpellier, 'Rapport: Chantiers de la Jeunesse, crédits necessaries' [n.d.].

Chapter Two

During the "phoney war," foresters had highlighted how reforestation could transform uncultivated land. Philippe Baudy recommended that swamp cypress be extensively planted on 'marshy lands' in Southern France, as this would prove profitable and augment France's timber supplies (swamp cypress, for instance. had been already introduced in the Bouches-du-Rhône in the 1870s from the deltas of Florida). This planting would also improve soil, thereby 'cleaning' marshland and 'replacing sad swamps with beautiful and healthy plantations.' [86] A. Joubert also urged a 300,000 hectare extension to forests in the Massif Central. This would make France self-sufficient in wood for paper production, as well as stopping the 'rural exodus' by providing jobs.[87] Likewise, another forester made the case for planting Aleppo pine in Provence as this species adapted well to the strong winds and shallow limestone soil of Mediterranean France. He did concede, however, that it would take centuries for the Provencal forest to return to its "natural" state. [88]

Foresters, then, welcomed Vichy's reforestation campaign, as, since at least the nineteenth century, they had been deeply concerned about deforestation, especially on mountain slopes, to which they attributed flooding on the plains and in the cities. Back in the 1860s, laws on reforestation aimed to reclaim uncultivated land. As Tamara Whited argues, 'the economically marginal forests, the sizeable areas of sparse woodland and scrub, would become prime targets of reclamation. to be converted into the densely packed. homogenous strands of conifers that fed

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[86] Philippe Bauby 'L'utilisation du cypress chauve dans le midi de la France,' *Revue des Eaux et Forêts* 78/3 (March 1940): 157-170.
[87] A. Joubert. 'Organisation de la forêt française et production des bois papetiers.' *Revue des Eaux et Forêts*. 77/12 (December 1939). 978-79.
[88] R. de Carmantrand 'Le pin d'alep dans la région méditerranéenne.' *Revue des Eaux et Forêts* 78/4-6. (April-June 1940). 223-30.

foresters' dreams.' [89] Scrubland, such as *maquis*, was regarded as unwanted "wasteland" and a sign of extensive deforestation of full-growth forest.

In many ways, *maquis*, *garrigue*, and other forms of Mediterranean scrubland epitomised foresters distaste for "wasteland." The origins of the term "maquis" are commonly believed to lie in the Corsican word *macchia* which alludes to the 'rough aspect of a terrain' that is 'covered with diverse and many-coloured shrubs.' [90] *Maquis* vegetation comprises of trees, shrubs, and plants that can withstand the twin hardships of poor soil and long dry spells that characterise the Mediterranean climate. [91] While the terms "maquis" and "garrigue" are often used interchangeably, both were associated with degraded Mediterranean forest before the war. [92] In fact, the status of *maquis* still divides experts today. Some consider it to be the result of extensive deforestation of a once great Mediterranean forest through agriculture, pasturing, war, and timber cutting, while others argue that *maquis* is all that can grow in the arid climate and so represents "climax" vegetation. [93]

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[89] Whited, *Forests and Peasant Politics in Modern France*, 63.

[90] Hervé Harant and Daniel Jarry, *Guide du naturaliste dans le Midi de la France: la garrigue, le maquis, les cultures* (Neuchâtel and Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1987), 136.

[91] Common trees include oaks, Spanish Broom, and tree heather. Among these species, the oaks are particularly sturdy. Typical shrubs and plants include heather, gorse, strawberry trees, juniper and lavender. See ibid.; and John R. McNeill, *The Mountains of the Mediterranean World: An Environmental History* (Cambridge and New York: University of Cambridge Press, 1992), 17-19.

[92] There is some confusion over the origin of the term *garrigue*. See Clément Martin, *La garrigue et ses hommes: une société tradititionalle* (Montpellier: Espace-Sud, 1996), 17; and Christiane Corre, *La garrigue: étude d'un milieu* (Montpellier: Centre Régional de Documentation Pédagogique, 1979), 3. According to J. V. Thirgood *garrigue* is a 'lower form' of *maquis* formed of low shrubs such as rosemary, myrtle, and lavender. See *Man and the Mediterranean Forest: A History of Resource Depletion* (London: Academic Press, 1981), 14. However, R. Tomselli argues that *maquis* is 'evergreen and generally so thick as to be impenetrable' where as *garrigue* is 'discontinuous' and grows on drier soil. See 'Degradation of the Mediterranean maquis,' in *MAB Technical Notes 2: Mediterranean Forests and Maquis: Ecology, Conservation and Management* (Paris: UNESCO, 1977), 40-1.

[93] For the former view, see McNeill, *Mountains of the Mediterranean World*, 2, 17, 266-70; Thirgood, *Man and the Mediterranean Forest*, 58-61; and Tomselli, 'Degradation of the Mediterranean maquis,' 40. For the latter, see A.T. Grove and Oliver Rackham, *The Nature of*

Chapter Two

Before the war, French foresters agreed with the first interpretation of *maquis*, treating it as a manmade form of vegetation that should be transformed into farmland or mature forest. Articles published in the *Revue des Eaux et Forêts* during the 1930s embodied foresters' unfavourable opinion of maquis. Writing in 1934, Josias Braun-Blanquet argued that surviving pockets of Mediterranean "climax" forests were more stable than areas of *maquis*. These green and Holm oak forests provided surrounding soil and vegetation with shelter from the arid winds of the Midi, thereby helping to retain more moisture. "Climax" oak forests in the Mediterranean, therefore, 'formed an indivisible biological ensemble of a perfect harmony.' [94] An article published five years later in the same journal drew similar conclusions using the forest of Saint-Baume in Provence as an example:

> In a very confined space, several steps apart, we find plant formations of which one, the wood of Sainte-Baume, is a balanced forest, almost a virgin forest (*forêt primitive*) with varied species, giving an abundant cover in summer, a sensation of freshness and harmony, while the neighbouring forests are constituted of Aleppo pines dominated by shrubs that seem to attract fire...[The latter forest] is the result of a regressive series of stages during which generations have pushed back the primitive forest as a result of management errors.' [95]

Whereas the balanced "primitive" forest offered shade from the Provencal sun and a sense of harmony, scrubland served only to encourage forest fires.

Mediterranean Europe: An Ecological History (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 9-10, 57-61.

[94] Josias Braun-Blanquet, 'Association végétale climatique et climax du sol dans le midi méditerranéen,' *Revue des Eaux et Forêts* 72/1 (January 1934), 1-7.

[95] 'Chronique forestière: France d'Outre-Mer,' *Revue des Eaux et Forêts* 77/ 10 (October 1939), 880-1.

Similarly, Alpine geographers unfavourably contrasted the verdant, heavily-forested northern slopes of the Vercors with the massif's dry, *garrigue*-covered southern slopes. Philippe Arbos located the Col de Rousset as a transitional point for the Vercors' climate and vegetation. On crossing it, Arbos wrote, one 'finds oneself transported from one nature to another, from the misty or cloudy atmosphere of the North to the clear and sunny sky of the South, from the land of pear and apple trees to that of almond and olive trees, from rich and green grasses to grey *landes* or denuded slopes.' [96] Jules Blache also contrasted the northern Vercors' 'wooded slopes' and 'green valleys' covered in 'mist and snow' with the southern Vercors' 'bare slopes' that baked under the 'harsh light of the South.' [97] For Blache, the *garrigue* that clung to the southern slopes of the Vercors was nothing more than a 'vast marginal desert' where the cover of vegetation was so 'scraggy' that it was possible to see 'bare soil' between the shrubs. [98] As well as displaying a clear aesthetic preference for Alpine "full-growth" forests, these influential geographers blamed the Mediterranean-style vegetation for contributing to the depopulation and relative economic backwardness of the Southern Vercors.

Signs of continuing official devaluation of *maquis* between 1940 and 1944 can be gleaned from forest fires reports in Provence. In these reports, care is taken to differentiate between areas of forest and *maquis*. For instance, in his evaluation of a fire in the commune of Mandelieu in the Alpes-Maritimes, the Forestry Inspector

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[96] Philippe Arbos, *La vie pastorale dans les Alpes françaises: étude de géographie humaine* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1922), 31.
[97] Jules Blache, *Les Massifs de la Grande-Chartreuse et du Vercors: étude geographique. Tome I: Géographie physique* (Grenoble: Éditions Didier et Richard, 1931), 394.
[98] See Jules Blache, *Les massifs de la Grande-Chartreuse et du Vercors: étude géographique. Tome II: Géographie humaine* (Grenoble: Éditions Didier et Richard, 1931), 12.

carefully distinguished between damage to forests and to *maquis*, noting how the fire spread across 'areas of pines and mimosas interspersed with wasteland and shrubs... One can't really say that this is "real" forest.' [99] Foresters and gendarmes discounted damage to *maquis* because the vegetation possessed little economic value. Commenting on a fire that spread across 65,000 hectares in the Bouches-du-Rhône, a high-ranking gendarme wrote that 'it should be noted that a large part of this area defined as forest is in fact covered with prickly bushes of an often negligible value. There were, however, very large damages caused to [those areas of] forest which deserve this name (*dignes de ce nom*).' [100] This was a typical attitude. One gendarme, describing another fire in the Bouches-du-Rhône, observed that the 'area covered by the fire... is completely uncultivated. The terrain is scrubby (*broussailleux*) and strewn with prickly broom. An uncultivated and long abandoned vineyard... suffered a bit during the fire; but there is no damage.' [101] This attitude was also shared by the mayor of La Turbie in the Alpes-Maritimes who, when reporting a fire in his commune, noted that there was 'little damage' as it was 'mainly bushes that fell victim to the flames.' [102] The implication behind the language used in forest fire reports was that only damage to "real" (and therefore

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[99] ADAM 521 W 57 Villiers, Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Nice Ouest, 'Rapport: incendie de forêts, incendie du 30 juillet sur la Commune de Mandelieu,' 1 August 1941.

[100] ADBDR 76 W 33 Lieutenant-Colonel Bergognon to Préfet Régional, 'Rapport sur les causes survenus dans la région de Marseille dans le courant de l'été 1942,' 4 September 1942.

[101] ADBDR 76 W 33 H. Franques, 'Procès-verbal relatant des renseignements sur un incendie de colline survenu au quartier du Baou à Vitrolles,' 27 August 1940.

[102] ADAM 521 W 57 Maire de la Turbie to Préfet des Alpes-Maritimes, 'Rapport sur une incendie qui s'est declaré dans la Région du Mont Bataille,' 29 July 1943. For similar cases see ADAM 521 W 57 'Adjoint de Maire de Roqueborne-Cap-Martin to Chef du Service Départemental des Incendies de Forêts, 18 April 1944; Maire de Mougins to Chef de Service Départemental des Incendies de Forêts, 19 July 1944. The commune of Carros, however, did want to protect its wooded areas from fire, for although they consisted mainly of economically unimportant copses they were of 'great interest' to tourism in the area. See ADAM 521 W 57 Commune de Carros, 'Extrait de registre de délibérations du conseil municipal, objet: protection des forêts communales contre l'incendie, demande de subvention,' 8 November 1942.

productive) forests mattered. *Maquis* was already damaged, "uncultivated" land so further fire-related damage was of little importance.

Moreover, foresters and other officials actually blamed scrubland for encouraging forest fires. The Gendarme Commander in the Var explicitly held *maquis* responsible for fuelling forest fires; 'the *varoise* forest, uneven in the extreme and divided by deep ravines, is, in many places, in the state of *maquis*. Copses and dense shrubs fill the undergrowth, line roads and railways, and provide easy fuel for the fires which can take on considerable proportions.' [103] The Forestry Conservator in Nice was presumably of the same mind as in a report on fire prevention measures he called for the 'total removal of *maquis*' in certain places to prevent the spread of fire. In particular, *maquis* must be removed when it lay close to houses and other property. [104]

Such attitudes obscure the fact that *maquis* was not wholly unproductive during the war. Agricultural engineer Philippe Olmi identified Spanish Broom (a plant that thrived in areas of *maquis* and which was commonly perceived as 'useless... even harmful') as a suitable replacement for unattainable fibres desperately needed by the French textile industry. Spanish Broom grew in its 'wild state' throughout Provence, so it was simply a matter of harvesting and cultivating

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[103] ADBDR 76 W 33 Chef d'Escadron Hurtrel, Commandant la Compagnie du Var, 'Rapport sur les incendies de forêt dans le département du Var, 29 August 1942.

[104] ADAM 109 W 8 M. Delahaye, Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, 'Rapport: incendies de Forêts,' 8 May 1941. Such attitudes towards *maquis* persisted into the postwar period in the publication *Le reboisement par les particuliers*, a 1947 guide for landowners planning to reforest their property. This guide drew attention to frequent forest fires in the Maures and Esterel massifs where 'maquis... is unfortunately abundant and is the essential cause for the propagation of fire.' P. Dutilloy and G. de la Serre, *Le reboisement par les particuliers. Dixième partie: région méditerranéenne, partie orientale de la chaine des Pyrénées et Corse* (Paris: Association Nationale du Bois, 1947), 52.

its seeds. Olmi urged the Chantiers de la Jeunesse to carry out this important task. [105] In addition, rural communities secured firewood and wood charcoal in the *maquis*, and, as Clément Martin highlights, Holm oak acorns were used as a replacement for coffee (a memory which still leads to a 'grimace' among those unfortunate enough to have tasted it). [106]

Foresters welcomed the wartime reforestation drive as a means of ridding the French landscape of "uncultivated" woodlands. As with farmland, re-cultivating the forest was linked to national renewal. Voices within the forestry sector identified reforestation as part and parcel of rebuilding defeated France. 'Just as a country which deforests is a country which dies, a people who want to be reborn are a people who reforest,' wrote J. Jagerschmidt in *L'Action forestière et pisicole*, just after the defeat. He urged communes and private forest owners to reforest their land (with the aid of the state) in order to exploit areas of heathland, *maquis*, and abandoned agricultural land. According to Jagerschmidt, reforestation was inseparable from national reconstruction; 'our duty, in the forestry domain as in all others, is to collaborate with the work of *redressement*, of reconstitution.' [107] In an article entitled 'Problem of the day: the crusade for reforestation' in *Le Bois National*, Georges Merlin argued that degraded forests were evidence of France's wider decline under the Third Republic. After years of neglect, France's formerly tree-covered mountains now stood 'wounded, ravaged, eaten away by water,' leaving only 'bare rocks' on display. For Merlin, these mountains were 'silent witnesses, but

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[105] Philippe Olmi, 'Chronique rurale: le Genêt d'Espagne,' *Jeunes de Provence: revue des Chantiers de la Jeunesse Française de Provence*, No. 2, December 1941, 23-6.
[106] Martin, *La garrigue et ses hommes*, 38.
[107] J. Jagerschmidt, 'Le programme forestier de la France qui va renaître,' *L'Action forestière et piscicole*, 39/40 (July 1940), 2.

how expressive, how accusatory, how damning for a regime [the Third Republic]! Formal and constantly present proof of its weaknesses and powerlessness.' Merlin called for a crusade to be launched to tell the French that a 'wooded region is a beautiful, fertile, and rich region.' [108]

State foresters were active in this reforestation crusade. Dugelay explicitly linked reforestation with Vichy's "back to the land" ideological posturing. 'The return to the soil... appears as a primordial factor of the balance which must mark the reconstruction of our country' he told members of the Society of Letters, Sciences, and Arts of the Alpes-Maritimes in 1942. He argued that the expansion of forested areas would bring greater prosperity to the mountains 'particularly at a time when forests take on more and more importance in the national economy.' [109] In a 1943 article in the *Revue de la Géographie alpine*, Dugelay took the opportunity to highlight how during the troubling times of war and occupation, France was now reaping the benefits of previous reforestation drives, noting the irony that peasant communities that had objected to reforestation plantations fifty years ago now relied on the wood these plantations provided. [110]

Between 1940 and 1944, books and other publications urged France to *reboiser* and provided detailed technical advice on how to do so. Associations in favour of the forest that had gained in strength in the 1930s, such as the Association nationale du Bois and the Société française des Amis des Arbres, produced

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[108] Georges Merlin, 'Problème du jour: croisade pour le reboisement,' *Le Bois National*, Vol. 7, No. 27, 5 September 1941, 273-4.

[109] 'Séance du Samedi 28 Mars 1942, 'Conférence de M. l'Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts Dugelay sur le retour à la terre et problème sylvo-pastoral dans les Alpes-Maritimes,' in *Annales de la Société des Lettres, Sciences, & Arts des Alpes-Maritimes* 36 (1942-1943), 17-18. Dugelay fleshed out his argument in a series of articles starting with 'Le retour à la terre et le problème sylvo-pastoral dans les Alpes-Maritimes,' *Revue des Eaux et Forêts* 81/4 (April 1943): 141-53.

[110] Dugelay, 'Les deboisements et les reboisements dans les Alpes-Maritimes (suite),' 154.

publications lauding reforestation's positive effects. [111] As well as providing information on what tree species thrived in different regions, foresters explicitly linked reforestation with the drive to cultivate France. In *Guide du reboiseur* (1941), L. Padré, a retired Forestry Conservator, argued that it has become:

> More and more necessary, urgent even, to take the maximum and best parts from the French soil, as well as exploiting (*mettant en valeur*) all unproductive ground, [and] increasing the yields of all land which, for diverse reasons, can produce more and better. Reforestation is, certainly, one of the best and most sure ways of obtaining these improvements. [112]

In the same publication, J. Demorlaine, another high-ranking, retired forester, argued that 'the exploitation of uncultivated land is more than ever necessary in France, especially since the disastrous war [of 1939-1940] that we've just endured.' According to Demorlaine, half a million hectares of land that belonged in the main to private landowners were ripe for reforestation. [113] The support that foresters lent to the battle against wasteland is illustrative of how Vichy's cultivation drive dovetailed with existing concerns about "uncultivated" land and how "back to the land-ism" extended beyond France's fields. Yet the regime's war against "wasteland" ultimately ended in failure.

Losing the war on wasteland

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[111] Société française des Amis des Arbres, *Guide du reboiseur* (Paris: Pierre André, 1941); and Association nationale de Bois, *Le Reboisement par les Particuliers, Quatrième Partie, Région des Alpes* (1941). There was a *Le Reboisement par les Particuliers* for every region in France.
[112] L. Padré, 'Préface,' *Guide du reboiseur*, 1.
[113] J. Demorlaine, 'Avant propos,' *Guide du reboiseur*, 3-4.

Chapter Two

In *La France en friche* (1989), journalist Eric Fottorino laments that war creates the ideal conditions for the encroachment of uncultivated land; 'it is always in times of conflict that *la friche* spreads most naturally. With the men gone. the women are only able to cultivate land closest to the village, leaving fertile soil to be abandoned.' [114] This seems to have been the case in Vichy France as between defeat and Liberation approximately three million hectares of cultivated land were lost. According to a 1944 report, the number of 'ploughable' hectares had dropped from 19,600,000 to 16,270,000 hectares (out of a total land area of 52,780,000 hectares). An expansion of pastures, other grasslands, and market gardening accounted for just over half of this loss, but 'uncultivated land' had nevertheless increased by 1,600,000 hectares [115] (see figure one).

Figure 1: Distribution of land 1938-1944 (in hectares)

Type of land	**1938**	**1944**	**Percentage of territory in 1938**	**Percentage of territory in 1944**
Ploughable land	19, 600, 000	16, 270, 000	37.4	30.8
Grasslands (fields, pastures etc)	11, 240, 000	12, 870, 000	21.3	24.4
Market gardening	420, 000	620, 000 (1943)	0.8	1.2 (1943)
Vineyards	1, 575, 000	1, 500, 000	2.9	2.8
Diverse	450, 000	460, 000 (1943)	0.8	0.9 (1943)
Wood and forests	10, 135, 000	10, 100, 000 (1943)	19.2	19.1 (1943)
Uncultivated territory (heathland, uncultivated land) and others	9, 360, 000	10, 960, 000 (1943)	17.8	20.8 (1943)
Total	**52, 780, 000**	**52, 780, 000**	**100**	**100**

Source: CHAN 207 AP 163 Vergeot and Aubé, *Rapport sur le problème agricole français: données et solutions* (Paris: 1944), 51.

As the surface area given for market gardening, forests, diverse land, and uncultivated soil dates from 1943, it is likely that these figures actually under

[114] Eric Fottorino, with Jean-Pierre Benoît, *La France en friche* (Saint-Amaud-Moutrond: Lieu Commun, 1989), 16.
[115] Vergeot et Aubé, *Rapport sur le problème agricole français*. Jean-Pierre Azéma provides similar figures in 'Faire face à la destruction de la guerre de 40,' in *Reconstructions et modernisation*, 35.

estimate the expansion of uncultivated land. This is because levels of timber requisitions, material shortages, and military combat increased as the Occupation continued. Yet even allowing for statistical error, it is clear that *la friche* expanded during the war.

The modification in land use during the war seems to have had some unintentional environmental benefits. Claude-Marie Vadort suggests that the expansion of uncultivated land benefited bird species (that were no longer so disturbed by harvesting), while the lack of fertilizers led to an increase in plant biodiversity. [116] Although Vichy succeeded in increasing the surface area of some forms of cultivated land, such as market gardening, it seems that, overall, its war against "wasteland" met with failure. Why was this?

Manpower problems were undoubtedly a factor as French agriculture suffered a severe shortage of experienced labourers; 55,000 farmers were killed in 1939-1940 and approximately 500,000 farmers and farm workers were prisoners of war in Germany (in all, France's farms lost thirteen percent of their male agricultural workers). [117] Other factors were also responsible. From autumn 1941 onwards, a 'persistent drought' hit France, compromising harvests and adding to food shortages.[118] The postwar Commission consultative des dommages et des réparations (CCDR) also blamed the German authorities for failing to keep 'nuisance animals' under control, which had 'regrettable consequences' for agriculture. According to

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[116] Claude-Marie Vadort, *Guerres et environnement: panorama des paysages et des écosystèmes bouleversés* (Paris: Delachux et Niestlé, 2005), 234.
[117] Gervais, Jollivet, and Tavernier, *Histoire de la France rurale*, 93.
[118] R. Rousset, 'Actualité: à propos de quatre années de sécheresse, 1942-1945,' *Revue de la Géographie alpine* 34/2 (1946): 313-18; and J. Sanson and M. Padré, 'Actualités: la sécheresse des années 1942-1949 en France,' *Revue de la Géographie alpine* 38/2 (1950), 269-403.

the CCDR, the Germans had failed to destroy enough 'nuisance animals.' Wild Boar populations, for instance, had increased three times in number with resultant crop damage. [119]

The scale of agricultural war damage was huge. In 1951, the CCDR estimated that damage to farmland itself was worth over five billion francs and the destruction caused to harvests, farm buildings and infrastructure by combat, German requisitions, and war-induced dilapidation came to almost seventy three billion francs. In addition, livestock worth approximately four-and-a-half billion francs had been requisitioned or destroyed and 690,000 horses parted from their owners. These losses represented six-and-a-half percent of the total number of horses in France, which created severe problems for under-mechanised French farms. [120] Moreover, the severe material shortages that necessitated the greater exploitation of French soil worked against the cultivation drive. Germany's annexation of Alsace-Lorraine deprived the rest of France of fertilizers, a particularly acute loss given the difficulty of importing them from elsewhere. Insecticides were also lacking, and "pests," such as the Colorado Beetle, thrived. The solution to this problem – sending schoolchildren out to fields to hunt beetles – was far from effective. [121] As these examples indicate, war and occupation had severely undermined French agriculture. As a post-Liberation government report put it, war's impact 'hit Val de Saire's

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[119] Commission consultative des dommages et des réparations, *Dommages subis par la France et l'Union française du fait de la guerre et de l'occupation ennemie (1939-1945)* (Imprimerie Nationale, 1951), 10 vols, Vol. 7, Monograph P.A.6 'Prélèvements allemands de produits agricoles: oeufs, volailles, gibier' (Imprimerie nationale, 1947), 25.
[120] Commission consultative, *Dommages subis par la France*, vol. 1. xiv. 234-239.
[121] Gervais Jollivet, and Tavernier, *Histoire de la France rurale*. 93.

grazing farms as well as those of Picardy, the alpine *buron* as well as Vendée smallholdings, [and] Caen's wheatfields as well as Alsacian vineyards.' [122]

Away from the fields, despite some practical measures achieved during the wartime reforestation campaign (such as the Forestry Administration's purchase of areas of *friche* for reforestation in the Alpes-Maritimes during 1941[123]), the attempt to reforest France seems to have emphatically failed. Writing in 1944, respected geographer Raoul Blanchard considered that after the laws of January 1942 foresters 'had been too preoccupied for us to imagine that a single hectare of [forest] has been added to the total after this date.' [124] Indeed, it seems that the January 1942 reforestation legislation was applied in an extremely limited fashion. [125] And as I show in chapter three, war damage, fire, and overproduction actually led to a contraction of forest areas.

In forests that experienced war damage, it seems that *maquis* made advances, in the short term at least. A scientific report into vegetative regeneration after forest fires in the Marseille region during July 1942 concluded that those species associated with *maquis*, such as Holm oak, regenerated well after the passage of fire (it took six to eight years for a Holm oak grove to reconstitute and between twenty-five and thirty years for a forest of Aleppo pine). [126] Elsewhere, a 1953 war damages report on the Charleval communal forest on the edge of the Luberon massif recorded

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[122] CHAN F [10] 7102, Commission de législation des dommages de guerre, Sous-Commission agricole, Prés. Gouverneur Général-adjoint aux dommages de guerre, 'Exposé fait et questions posées à la Sous-Commission,' 4 July 1945, 1. A *buron* is an alpine herdman's cottage, and commonly has room for cheese-making and a room for living.

[123] See files in ADAM 521 W 22.

[124] Raoul Blanchard, 'Deboisement et reboisement dans les Préalpes françaises du Sud,' *Revue de la Géographie alpine*, 32/3 (1944), 372.

[125] *Eaux et forêts du 12e au 20e siècle*, 642.

[126] L. Berner, *Feux de collines et végétation: documents pour les cartes des productions végétales*, Série France-Mediterranéenne, Tome: Provence, Vol. 1., No. 1. (1943), 8, 13.

how aerial bombardments on 22 August 1944 destroyed 235 hectares of forest and thirty five hectares of thickets (*taillis*). Since the fire, the pine forest had failed to regenerate. Instead, a *maquis* of Kermes oaks and broom had thrived.[127]

When assessing responsibility for the failure to cultivate France, it seems only fair to stress that Pétain and his government could do nothing about drought conditions and very little about war damage. However, the terms of the Armistice that Pétain signed locked France into an unequal relationship with Germany, leaving the latter country free to exploit the former's agricultural resources. Ironically then, one of the Vichy's foundations – state collaboration with Germany – undermined the regime's attempts to transform France's landscape.

On a more imaginative level, the model of rural France that Pétain and traditionalist Vichyites promoted held little appeal. Only 1,561 families took up "back to the land" credits to cultivate abandoned farms, of whom 409 failed to make a success of it. [128] An article in the official publication of the Chantiers de la Jeunesse also noted that some people found that the 'theme of the *retour à la terre*' had been promoted to 'excess' and the over-repetition of the message had led to a loss in its efficiency. [129] Furthermore, the Second World War had sharply exposed the gap between French agriculture and modern mechanised technology, convincing

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[127] The emergence of the *maquis* was unwelcome and Charleval's mayor was keen for the forest to be replanted as it was 'one of the commune's rare resources, as well as being a place of promenade, beauty, and relaxation for the inhabitants.' See ADBDR 51 W 73 G. Leitzélément, 'Dommages de guerre: rapport d'expertise, no. de dossier CA-44949-AG reconnaissance des lieux 28 et 29 October 1953'; and ADBDR 51 W 73 R. Gaston, Maire de Charleval to Délégué départemental de la Reconstruction et de l'Urbanisme, Marseille, 5 October 1953.

[128] Paxton, *Vichy France*, 208.

[129] CHAN AJ [39] 55 P. B., 'L'agriculture française, fin septembre 1941,' *Bulletin officiel des Chantiers de la Jeunesse*, No. 61, 16 October 1941, 1.

many peasants of the urgent need for agrarian modernisation. [130] In the postwar period, France moved towards an agricultural model founded on state planning, specialisation, intensification, and mechanisation. The seeds of this change were sown between 1940 and 1944, as the technocratic strand of the Vichy regime gained the upper hand over *pétainiste* traditionalists and the corporatist model. [131]

Peasants also proved unresponsive to Vichy "back to the land" rhetoric. According to Kedward, the regime's '"retour à la terre" as a high-minded cultural concept was broken on the hard realities of peasant obduracy and subversion.' [132] Peasants (along with other sections of French society) were unresponsive to Vichy rhetoric and wanted help developing modern farming techniques not romantic evocations of rural life. [133] Furthermore, they regarded state officials as 'alien city people' only interested in requisitioning their food and land and saw the Peasant Corporation as a coercive state organisation. Therefore, peasants tried to keep their distance from it, especially as it became increasingly a mechanism of state control over the agricultural sector as worsening food shortages required greater state intervention. [134]As Jean-Pierre Azéma notes, like the rest of the National Revolution, 'seldom can there have been greater discrepancy between intentions and results.' [135] Furthermore, peasant communities played a pivotal role in rural resistance activity. Kedward highlights how, after 1942, peasants sheltered young men escaping

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[130] Gervais Jollivet, and Tavernier, *Histoire de la France rurale*, 101.
[131] Cleary, *Peasants, Politicians, and Producers*, 103; Paxton, *Vichy France*, 352; and de Planhol and Claval, *Historical Geography of France*, 444-9.
[132] Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, 144.
[133] H. R. Kedward, *Occupied France: Collaboration and Resistance, 1940-1944* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 24.
[134] Gordon, 'Countryside and the City,' in Fishman *et al.*, *France at War*, 146-7; and Paxton, *Vichy France*, 209.
[135] Jean-Pierre Azéma, From *Munich to the Liberation 1938-1944* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984 [1979]), 62.

compulsory labour in Germany and provided food and other support to *maquisards*. For Kedward, this instance of peasant resistance inverted the regime's "back to the land" philosophies and was a 'shudder of life' from a 'taciturn peasantry.' [136]

The war on "wasteland" was also lost in the sense that rural resistance movements adopted the name *maquis* from 1943 onwards, therefore investing what was largely viewed as a degraded landscape with new meanings. [137] *Maquis* did have some admirers in pre-war France, including writers who celebrated its romantic and sensual qualities. In *Paysages de Provence*, Alphonese Donnadieu remarked on the 'exquisite scent of *maquis* and pine trees' which 'follow and intoxicate' him when he leaves Provence. [138] Jean-Louis Vaudoyer also praised *maquis* as 'austere, efficient, quasi-immortelle vegetation, which seems to hardly nourish itself on water but on fire.' The Mediterranean hills on which it grew constituted an 'heroic landscape' and, according to the time of day, the Provencal sun would render the hills' bare summits 'pink, lilac, [and] blue like crystals.'[139] It was not just French writers who were seduced by the *maquis*' charms. In 1933, Susanne Day commented that 'the sweet, pungent odour [of Mediterranean vegetation] is the breath of Provence, woven into the fabric of her being.'[140]

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[136] Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, especially 115, 233.

[137] Boulet suggests that "maquis" was first used as a label for partisan fighters in 1941 with reference to the Balkans. See 'Montagne et résistance,' 267. According to Kedward, "maquis" was more distinctive than "bois," "forêt," or "montagne," and was specific to the countryside ("franc-tireur' and "group franc" were already associated with urban resistance). In addition, "maquis" suggested combat and rebellion without the negative connotations of *réfractaire* and so 'quickly established a hold over the imagination of all those involved in revolt.' As a consequence, the terms "maquis" and "maquisard" 'entered the history and language of Resistance with an effect which is difficult to imagine.' Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, 29-30.

[138] Alphonese Donnadieu, *Paysages de Provence, la côte des Maures de Toulon au Golfe de Fréjus: ses calanques, ses forêts, ses îles d'Or* (Paris: Éditions Berger-Levrault, 1932), Preface, 189.

[139] Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, *Beautés de la Provence* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1928), 21, 237.

[140] Susanne. R. Day, *Where the Mistral Blows: Impressions of Provence* (London: Methuen, 1933), 2-3.

But *maquisards* were the first group within mainland French society to invest *maquis* landscapes with national purpose. [141] For a start, as Kedward argues, the *maquis* liked to think of themselves as the 'vanguard' of French society in opposition to Vichy, laying claim to 'a higher morality and patriotism.' [142] As the war and occupation continued, the *maquis*' legitimacy and importance grew, especially after the introduction of the deeply unpopular Service du Travail Obligatoire (STO) in February 1943, which sent young French men to work German factories. As a consequence, *maquisards* widened the geographical context of *maquis* as they did not restrict their resistance activities to areas of *maquis* defined in the botanical sense. *Prendre le maquis* referred to resistance in places as diverse as Alpine mountains, the hills of Brittany, or the plains of northern France. [143] This emergence of diverse and localised resistance groups throughout France brought the *maquis* out of the dry Mediterranean region and gave it a national reach and significance. [144]

Ironically, however, *maquis* landscapes were not necessarily the best place for *maquisards* to shelter. Although areas of *maquis* offered good cover and were difficult for Vichy's *milice* and German troops to enter, there were disadvantages. Not least, food and water supplies could be scarce. [145] Forestry camps were a better

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[141] On Corsica, *maquis* is both bound to and reinforces the island's singular identity especially since its conquest in 1775 when the phrase became increasingly widespread as vanquished rebels took to the scrubland. Jean-Dominique Poli, 'Maquis, génie du lieu,' in Laurence J. Lorenzi (ed.), *Le maquis corse, d'après les textes anciens et modernes* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002), 49-51.
[142] Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, 107, 162.
[143] Ibid. 30.
[144] The *maquis* label even spread beyond France's borders into distinctly un-Mediterranean Belgium. See Fernand Desonay, *Maquis des Ardennes et de chez nous* (Bruxelles: Éditions du Mouvement National Belge, 1947).
[145] Christian Durandet, *Les maquis de Provence* (Paris: Éditions France-Empire, 1974), 122-9.

prospect, providing excellent shelter, employment, and a semblance of legality for *maquisards* (see chapter three).

In 1938, Ernst Bénévent described *maquis* and Mediterranean scrubland as 'rebel lands,' resisting all attempts to cultivate and control them. [146] The resistance's appropriation of the *maquis* gave new meaning to notion of 'rebel lands,' and shows how "wasteland" challenged the Vichy state on a political and social level. At the same time, *maquis* and other types of "wasteland" showed their rebellious nature by resisting Vichy's cultivation drive. The reinvention of the *maquis* points to the multiple failures of Vichy's war on "wasteland," attesting to the fact that nature and the meanings attached to it resisted easy manipulation during the war. In addition, it highlights the tensions between productive and "wild" land which increased during the war due to material constraints, as well as the ways in which the resistance reclaimed control of the countryside from Vichy. These themes are evident in the wartime history of France's forests. Vichy struggled to cultivate fields, drain marshes, and reforest, and it encountered serious problems when it tried to boost forestry production. *Maquisards* also challenged the regime's political appropriation of the forest environment.

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[146] Ernst Bénévent, 'La vielle économie provençale,' *Revue de géographie Alpine* 27/3 (1938): 531-35.

Chapter Three

'The Age of Wood': Forests in Wartime France [1]

In Jean Giono's short story *The Man Who Planted Trees* the narrator wanders across a 'landscape of unparalleled desolation' in 'the ancient region where the Alps extend into Provence.' In this dry, sparsely populated region he meets a serene shepherd, Elzéard Bouffer, who has selflessly taken it upon himself to plant thousands of trees in the arid soil to save this region that was dying from a 'lack of trees.' After five years in the army during the First World War and desiring 'to breathe some fresh air,' our narrator returns to find that whilst he was fighting in the trenches the good shepherd was sowing 'beautiful birch plantations.' When war breaks out again in 1939, their remote location saves the shepherd's trees from being turned into fuel and the war passes Bouffer by; 'he didn't even know about it...going peacefully on with his task, ignoring the 1939 war just as he'd ignored the war of 1914.' Over the years, Bouffer transformed the 'wilderness' into a 'healthy and prosperous' region where water, wildlife, and villages burst into life, nourished by the trees and where a 'soft and scented breeze' replaced the 'rough and arid gusts' that once swept across the mountains.[2]

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[1] A version of this chapter appears as Chris Pearson, 'The Age of Wood: Fuel and Fighting in French Forests, 1940-1944,' *Environmental History* 11 (October 2006): 775-803.

[2] Jean Giono, *The Man Who Planted Trees* (London: Harvill Press, 1995). The story originally appeared in the 1950s and has since been published in countries as diverse as New Zealand, Kenya, Finland, and the United States. Giono's own wartime history is somewhat murky and after the war he appeared on a 'black list' of writers who had collaborated. See Pierre Citron,

In Giono's tale the trees avoid the ravages of war, allowing them to exert their healing influence on the region. In reality, however, France's forests did not escape the Second World War and between 1940 and 1944 they were overexploited and transformed into sites of combat and political appropriation. Forests were an integral component of France's wartime history and were essential to ensure the continuation of the economy and "everyday" life. When one forester claimed in 1942 that 'having seen the age of iron we are today experiencing the age of wood,' his observation was by no means unjustifed. [3]

The surface area of forests in France before the war has been put at 10,135,000 hectares (or approximately one fifth of national territory). [4] But although forests feature prominently on the French landscape, their wartime history is under-researched. [5] Using the forests of South Eastern France as a case study (with some reference to other sites, such as Tronçais forest in the Allier *département*) this chapter outlines the history of French forests during the "dark years," from both material and cultural perspectives. [6]

I argue that forests constituted a vital source of replacement products at a time of severe material shortages and, as a consequence, the Vichy government

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'Giono pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale,' *Jean Giono* 12 (1979): 16-33; and Richard J. Golsan, *French Writers and the Politics of Complicity: Crises of Democracy in the 1940s and 1990s* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 77-101.

[3] René Diderjean, 'Il faut reboiser, *Le Bois*, 25 January 1942, 1.

[4] Vergeot et Aubé, *Rapport sur le problème agricole français*, 51.

[5] The war years feature in broad overviews of French forest history, but the coverage is descriptive rather than interpretative and lacks a solid empirical base. See Louis Badré, *Histoire de la forêt française* (Paris: Arthaud, 1983); and *Eaux et Forêts du 12e au 20e siècle.*

[6] Environmental histories of war have so far approached the relationship between wood and war through the lens of resource depletion and changes to forestry management. Missing from these accounts are localised variations and inconsistencies, as well as the cultural significance of forests during wartime. See Judith A. Bennett, 'Local Resource Use in the Pacific War with Japan: Logging in Western Melanesia,' *War and Society* 21 (May 2003): 83-118; McNeill, 'Woods and Warfare in World History,' 388-410; Richard P. Tucker, 'The World Wars and the Globalization of Timber Cutting,' in Russell and Tucker *Natural Enemy, Natural Ally*, 110-41; and West, 'Forests and National Security,' 270-94. On forests in Provence, see Martine Chalvet, 'L'invention de la forêt méditerranéenne de la fin du XVIIIe siècle aux années 1960,' PhD diss. University of Aix-en-Provence 1, (2000); and *Forêts perdues, forêts retrouvés* (Marseille: Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône, 1997).

strove to increase their productivity. But forests were not just material spaces as traditional elements within the regime, including Pétain, imbued the forest with meanings associated with their "back to the land" rhetoric. However, from late 1942 onwards, resistance movements began to physically and imaginatively reclaim the forest from Vichy, turning it into a space of revolt and subversion. Alongside these changes, the history of forests in wartime France contained elements of continuity. Vichy's material and cultural mobilisation of the forest was the latest manifestation in a long tradition of state forest control, while the French Forestry Administration struggled to uphold its policy of *aménagement* and its regulation of France's forests. This was no easy task as German and Italian armies wrought havoc among the trees, challenging French control of the forest and undermining Vichy's production drive. Increased numbers of forest fires also posed a problem for the Forestry Administration, as did military combat in the forest. As the years passed, Vichy's and the Forestry Administration's hold on the forest weakened as the occupation armies' grip tightened, meaning that forests suffered more and more from the effects of over-exploitation, fire, and combat. Despite elements of continuity, therefore, these four years – a blink of an eye in the life of a forest – ushered in significant economic, political, cultural, and ecological changes to France's forests.

Creating the productive forest

After French military defeat in summer 1940, severe material shortages meant that the forest played a vital role in ensuring the continuation of any semblance of normal existence. Wood-derived products seeped into all areas of

the economy and "everyday" life. In the words of Charles Colomb, General Director of the Forestry Administration, 'today the French turn a look charged with hope towards their forests... almost everyone expects something from [them] that will help them survive these difficult times: householders need fuel for their fireplace; farmers, litter for their animals; bakers, wood for their ovens; tanners, bark for their leather; transporters, wood or wood charcoal for their *gazogènes*; and, finally, industrialists [need] raw materials... for their businesses.' [7] As Colomb's remarks indicate, wood kept the French warm and baked their bread, as coal and oil supplies were limited or non-existent. As such, war and occupation "turned the clock back" and the French rediscovered wood's traditional importance as a fuel. Furthermore, alongside this more customary use of wood, forests provided more specialised replacement products for industrial materials that were 'particularly deficient.' [8]

Severe petrol shortages posed a particular problem and wood stepped into the breach in the form of *gazogène* (regarding motor cars and other means of transport, the *gazogène* system refers to the conversion of wood or wood charcoal into gas using a metal furnace attached to the vehicle in order to power the engine). [9] In 1936, Pétain had published a leaflet in favour of *gazogène*, in which he argued that 'the industrial production of the gas of the forests could contribute to the revival (*redressement*) of the French economy [and] could immediately provide precious support for national defence.' [10] And in 1938, *La gaz de forêts* promoted *gazogène* fuel, urging the French to realise the potential

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[7] Charles Colomb, 'Préface,' in Roger Blais and Gérard Luzu, *Les métiers de la forêt* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1941), 3-4

[8] ADD 61 W 6 Pierre Pucheu, Secrétaire d'État à l'Intérieur, Pierre Cazoit, Secrétaire d'État à l'Agriculture, Lehideux, Secrétaire d'État à la Production Industrielle to Préfets Régionaux et Préfets Départementaux, 'Réparition des bois,' 10 January 1942.

[9] For a fuller explanation of the *gazogène* system see Veillon, *Vivre et Survivre en France*, 194.

[10] Quoted in *Eaux et Forêts du 12e au 20e siècle*, 629.

of the 'gas of the forest.' [11] In his preface to the book, André Liautey, Under-Secretary of State for Agriculture, even made the bold claim that trees 'henceforth appear as an inexhaustible source of energy.' [12] In the same year, Liautey's immediate superior, Henri Queuille, called for the development of *gazogène* in the face of economic competition in Europe that forced countries like France to fall back on their own natural resources. [13]

But it was only after 1940 that *gazogène,* a fuel previously only used to power forestry vehicles, began to be taken seriously. Motoring associations organised exhibitions promoting 'the gas of the forest' and Vichy introduced measures to encourage drivers to convert their vehicles.[14] *Gazogène* vehicles did not work as smoothly or efficiently as petrol-powered ones, but, as one eyewitness remembers, 'at least they ran.' [15] It is therefore no surprise that wood and wood charcoal production for *gazogènes* increased from pre-war figures of approximately fifty thousand tons a year to almost half a million tons in 1943. [16] The case of *gazogène* amply illustrates that wood had become the 'substitute *par excellence*' during the war. [17]

Both state and private foresters revelled in the rediscovered importance of wood and there was a sense of satisfaction that after years of indifference the

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[11] A. Lepoivre and G. Septembre, *La gaz des forêts: carburants forestiers gazogènes* (Paris: Société nationale d'encouragement à l'utilisation des carburants forestiers, 1938).
[12] André Liautey, 'Préface: la forêt française accumulateur d'énergie,' in ibid. 11.
[13] 'Congrès inter-régional du gaz des forêts,' *Revue des Eaux et Forêts* 76/10 (October 1938), 816.
[14] 'Actes officiels,' *Revue des Eaux et Forêts*, 79/9 (September 1941), 689. For promotional activities in favour of gazogènes see ADBDR 194 W 29 André Huart, Président de l'Automobile-Club de Marseille & Provence to Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Aix-en-Provence, 2 April 1941; and Veillon, *Vivre et Survivre en France 1939-1947,* 194.
[15] Interview with Elvio Segatto, Pizançon, 3 August 2005. Tapes and notes in author's possession.
[16] Commission consultative des dommages et des réparations, *Dommages subis par la France et l'Union française du fait de la guerre et de l'occupation ennemie (1939-1945)* (Imprimerie Nationale, 1951), 10 vols., Vol 6 Monograph M.P.18, 'Prélèvements allemands de matières premières: bois et produits forestiers,' (Imprimerie nationale, 1947), 29.
[17] CACAN 19800470/168 Formery, Inspecteur Général des Finances, Commissaire du Pouvoir to Vice-Amiral, Commissaire Général du Pouvoir, 'Quelques observations sur l'approvisionnement en bois,' 24 March 1942, 1.

French finally appreciated the forest. One article in *L'Action forestière et piscicole*, the official publication of the Comité d'entente de la forêt française et de l'union nationale des syndicats de l'étang, detailed, with evident glee, how military defeat had brought about the 'revenge' of the forest. After years of neglect, the forest now saw 'coming back to her, anxious and distraught, all those who abandoned her. [But] she is good and without bitterness. She will provide the wood that is now indispensable so that we can eat our daily bread and keep away the cold this winter.'[18] Foresters nurtured the notion that the forest was forever ready to make the necessary sacrifices to ensure France's survival. One argued that 'in times of crisis, it's always towards the forest that the nation turns to demand ever varied and ever increasing sacrifices.' [19] Another concurred, arguing that after military defeat 'the French forest, symbol and refuge of the soul of the country, is ready, once more in our history, to serve and to save' the nation. [20] Wood, asserted *Le Bois National*, was now 'as important to the country's economy as wheat, meat, wine or potatoes.' [21]

The pressure on the forest and the importance of wood was recognised beyond the specialist forestry press. In Provence, newspapers drew public attention to the fact that the high level of forest fires endured by the region might threaten wartime forestry production. Stories relating the destruction wrought by the latest fires jostled for space on front pages alongside reports on the progress of the war in Russia or North Africa. [22] A front page editorial in *Le Petit*

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[18] 'La revanche de la forêt,' *L'Action forestière et piscicole*, No. 43, October 1940, 1.
[19] Charles de Lassuchette, 'L'organisation Forestière au sein de la Corporation Nationale est realisé,' *L'Action forestière et piscicole*, No. 72, March 1943.
[20] J. Jagerschmidt, 'Le programme forestier de la France qui va renaître,' *L'Action forestière et piscicole*, Nos. 39-40, July 1940, 2.
[21] Henri Rieuf, 'Organisation forestière: mobilisation des ressources forestières,' *Le Bois National*, No. 35, 15 December 1941, 393-96.
[22] For example, see 'Activé par un vent violent le feu ravage les bois dans les Bouches-du-Rhône,' *Le Petit Provençal*, 16 July 1942, 1.

Provençal called for a state-led and state-financed plan to coordinate and ensure the reforestation of Provence's fire-ravaged forests. In making its case, the paper reminded its readers of the long-term importance of the forest as a measure against landslides and floods as well as the current importance of wood: 'today, everyone realises the primordial role of wood and its derivatives... in the national economy.'[23]

As another commentator in *Le Petit Var* newspaper noted, France can 'no longer afford any wastage and must call on all the resources of the country: the forest is one of our greatest riches and its intensive but rational exploitation will give us unappreciable benefits...the organisation of the fight against destructive fire is therefore one of the most important questions of the moment.' [24] The Prefect of the Alpes-Martimes agreed: 'each year vast areas of forest and woodlands fall victim to the flames. Today more than ever it is necessary to ensure the security of the *département's* forestry resources. In effect, it's the national interest which is at stake and demands it.' [25]

With increased expectations placed on the forest, the Vichy government reorganised French forestry structures in a bid to boost production and 'mobilise the country's forestry resources.' [26] Most significantly, the law of 8 August 1940 obliged all owners of forests over ten hectares to exploit fifty percent more wood than normal and set fines for every undeclared or unexploited hectare of woodland. The law also enabled the Forestry Administration to fix an annual

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[23] 'Après les incendies de forêts il faut reboiser,' *Le Petit Provençal*, 18 July 1942, 1.
[24] Louis Henseling, 'Nos fôrets [sic] brûlent,' *Le Petit Var*, 8 September 1940, 4.
[25] ADAM 521 W 50 Préfet des Alpes-Maritimes to Conservateur des Eaux et forêts, 'Incendies de forêts – Lutte – Organisation,' 10 March 1942. On a local level, mayors felt frustrated by inefficient fire-fighting activity, especially as forest fires threatened to have 'considerable repercussions on the regional economy.' ADAM 521 W 57 Colonel Martinet, Maire de Cannet, to Préfet des Alpes-Maritimes, 'Organisation de la lutte contre les incendies de forêts,' [n.d.].
[26] *Agriculteurs, voici ce qu'en un an le gouvernement du Maréchal a fait pour vous*, 6; and *Eaux et Forêts du 12e au 20e siècle*, 628-9.

volume of timber to be extracted from the forest and divide up this production among private forest owners. [27] This law strengthened the Third Republic's decree of 20 January 1940 that obliged landowners with more than ten hectares of wood to declare timber production possibilities to the authorities and to set a date for its realisation. Failing that, the state was entitled to requisition the timber. [28] With these laws, Vichy increased state control over private forests, which made up approximately two-thirds of France's forestry resources. This again strengthened laws and structures introduced by the Third Republic during the "phoney" war, such as the creation of the Comité du bois et des produits forestiers (Committee of Wood and Forest Products), which was charged with organising military timber supplies. [29]

Like farming (see chapter two), the forestry sector was brought in line with Vichy's vision of a corporatist society. The law of 13 August 1940 on the organisation of forestry production introduced a corporatist forestry structure giving the state greater control over felling, permits, prices, and the stocks in saw mills. Groupements interprofessionnels forestiers (Inter-Professional Forestry Groups) or GIF were created in each region, consisting of two forest proprietors, two timber merchants, and two state foresters, and were given responsibility for assessing the state of timber resources and fixing prices and distribution. [30] Private foresters were obliged to carry GIF-distributed professional cards, broken into different categories for forest owners (cards A and B), workers in saw mills (card C), charcoal burners (card D), and producers of wood for *gazogènes* (card

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[27] 'Loi fixant la possibilité à exploiter chaque année par tous les propriétaires,' in 'Actes officiels,' *Revue des Eaux et Forêts* 78/ 7-9 (July-September 1940), 334; and *Eaux et Forêts du 12e au 20e siècle*, 630.
[28] 'Décret relatif à la production forestière en temps de guerre,' *L'Action forestière et pisicole*, No. 35, February 1940, 1.
[29] *Eaux et Forêts du 12e au 20e siècle*, 628.
[30] See 'Actes officiels,' 336-7.

E). Only those owners with less than ten hectares of forest and those supplying local, rural communities were exempt. [31] In February 1943 the corporatist character of the forest was strengthened when the Comité intersyndical de la forêt privée (Inter-syndical Committee of Private Forests) was incorporated into the Corporation paysanne. [32]

Vichy tightened forestry regulations but its control over French wood resources was incomplete. As the Secretary of State for Industrial Production admitted, 'the wood on the border of roads, rivers, canals, *bocages*, hedges etc... is infinitely disseminated and there is no question of making an inventory [of these resources] and centralising them on the national scale.' [33] This wood was too dispersed and marginal to interest the central state and was left for small rural communes (of under 10,000 inhabitants) to supply themselves with fuel. The Regional Prefect of Lyon suggested that these communities should 'make the maximum effort to obtain wood from river banks, hedges, and parks etc.' [34]

To meet the growing demand for wood, more and more workers were dispatched to the forest. As well as boosting forestry production, this migration to the forest corresponded with the regime's "back to the land" ethos and soaked up young unemployed men who might otherwise be a source of potential unrest. Charles Colomb, the Forestry Administration's Director General, summed up this attitude, arguing that forest exploitation both 'ensures work for the demobilised and those workers fired from munitions factories, and... prepares the "return to

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[31] ADBDR 194 W 25 'Aide-mémoire sur les cartes professionelles G.I.F.' [n.d].
[32] 'L'organisation de la forêt privée,' *Revue des Eaux et forêts* 82/4 (May 1944), 264-80.
[33] ADD 61 W 6 Sécretariat d'Etat à la Production Industrielle to Répartiteur, Chef de la Section du bois de l'Office central de Répartition des Produits Industriels, 'Décision M6 du 1 août 1942.'
[34] ADD 61 W 7 Préfet Régional to Préfets de la région de Lyon, Conservateurs des Eaux et Forêts de la région de Lyon, 'Réparition des bois de feu,' 28 March 1942.

the soil."' [35] The Chantiers de la Jeunesse youth movement brought thousands of young men to the forest where it provided them with a patriotic education and manual labour. The Chantiers' founder, General de la Porte du Theil (who was the son of a forestry official and an 'outdoorsman of long standing'[36]) boasted that his recruits supplied 'a large quantity of the wood and wood charcoal needed by the country.' [37] His claim was not unfounded; in 1942 alone the Chantiers cut 440,400 tonnes of wood and produced 13,000 tonnes of wood charcoal. [38] An article in *L'Effort* praised the determination of Chantiers detachments who worked tirelessly in Cluny forest chopping wood and producing wood charcoal to supply Lyon for the approaching winter. Throughout the forest, the journalist reported, the young arms of the Chantiers recruits 'pushed back and gave a slap' to the 'cold, with its old face of hatred and menace.' [39] However, despite the Chantiers' efforts, wood supplies failed to meet demand.

Forestry production problems

The failure to match timber supply with demand highlights the discrepancy between the Vichy regime's intentions and material realities. France desperately needed to boost forestry production (its timber imports dropped from 2,400,000m^3 to 100,000m^3 during the war), but statistics provided by the Commission consultative des dommages et des réparations (CCDR) suggest that

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[35] ADV 1790 W 122 Charles Colomb to Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Aix-en-Provence, 'Travaux d'améliorations pastorales et forestière,' 5 October 1940, 1.
[36] Paxton, *Parades and Politics at Vichy*, 205.
[37] CHAN AJ [39] 166 Général de la Porte du Theil to Préfet de l'Haute-Loire, 21 November 1941.
[38] CHAN AJ [39] 168 Mourey, Commissaire Général-Adjoint, for Général de la Porte du Theil, 'Note pour les Commissaires régionaux concernent l'emploi de la main d'oeuvre,' 4 May 1943.
[39] CHAN AJ [39] 166 André Tissier, 'Pour que les Lyonnais n'aient pas froid les Jeunes des Chantiers travaillent ferme,' *L'Effort*, 6 October 1940, 1-3.

construction and industry-grade timber production did not rise significantly during the war in comparison with pre-war figures. For although there was an increase in production in 1942 and 1943 (see figure one), it did not offset the shortfall created by the massive drop in timber imports. [40] And on a local level. forestry production rates in the Marseille region were unable to match the Forestry Administration's predictions (see figure two).

Figure 1. Forestry production in metropolitan France (raw timber in m^3)

	Average pre-war production (in 87 départements)	**1940 (2nd semester)**	**1941**	**1942**	**1943**	**1944 (1st semester)**
Wood for construction (poles, beams etc)	6,1952,400	3,710,500	7,421,000	8,049,000	7,695,000	4,000,000
Wood for industry (paper, leather etc)	3,056,000	1,179,000	2,358,000	3,335,000	3,014,000	1,876,000
Totals	**10,008,400**	**4,889,500**	**9,779,000**	**11,384,000**	**10,689,000**	**5,876,000**

Source: *Commission consultative des dommages et des réparations, Dommages subis par la France et l'Union française du fait de la guerre et de l'occupation ennemie (1939-1945)* (Imprimerie nationale, 1951), 10 vols. Vol. 6 Monograph M.P.18 'Prélèvements allemands de matières premières: bois et produits forestiers (Imprimerie nationale, 1947), 11. N.B this table doesn't include figures for the Nord and Pas-de-Calais *départements*, nor those in the annexed regions of Alsace and Lorraine.

Figure 2. Production figures for the Marseille region, 1 October 1943 to 1 April 1944

	Prediction for exploitation from 01/10/43 to 01/04/44		**Volume actually exploited from 01/10/43 to 01/04/44**		**Percentage actually exploited**	
Département	Construction-grade timber (m^3)	Firewood (steres)	Construction-grade timber (m^3)	Firewood (steres)	Construction-grade timber (m^3)	Firewood (steres)
Alpes-Maritimes	12,000	82,500	8,000	66,500	63%	85%
Basses-Alpes	10,000	115,000	4,100	35,000	50%	27%
Bouches-du-Rhône	15,000	105,000	15,000	78,000	100%	75%
Gard	4,000	150,000	2,000	76,000	50%	50%
Hautes-Alpes	12,500	27,500	8,000	9,000	63%	33%
Var	100,000	300,00	40,000	150,000	40%	50%
Vaucluse	5,000	97,500	3,600	72,000	60%	70%

Source: ADBDR 194 W 5 'Abatage prévu et réalisé du 1-10-1943 au 1-4-1944' [n.d.]

[40] The pre-war production possibility was 10,000,000m3 and the wartime average 10,617,333 m3 (based on the years 1941-1943 and excluding Eastern and Northern *départements*). Commission consultative, *Dommages subis par la France et l'Union française*. Vol. 6, 5, 11.

Vichy was well aware of these production problems. In March 1942 a governmental report highlighted that the 'country can't meet its wood needs' and that 'stocks have fallen to almost nothing.' [41] Mines needed forty percent more wood than they were receiving in order to produce at capacity, and there were problems replacing railway sleepers and wagons. In addition, wood was lacking in the cities 'to such an extent' that 'worse social dangers' threatened to strike in the coming winter. [42]

The problems hampering forestry production were multiple. For a start, Vichy's control over the forest was incomplete. The regime's legislation excluded owners of forests of under ten hectares, a policy criticised by Formery, Inspector General for Finances, as it allowed these owners 'the unbelievable privilege... [of] being able to leave an indispensable resource unused, or even sell it as they wish on the black market.' [43] This was no small matter as the wood from these forests was 'particularly important' for firewood. [44]

To make matters worse, the GIF forestry card system did not always work smoothly. The Forestry Inspector in the Var lamented that almost all forestry exploiters were 'completely uneducated' about Vichy's reorganisation of the sector, while in the Bouches-du-Rhône, a government official admitted that that the 'majority' of forest owners were unable to provide accurate and complete statistics, either deliberately or through ignorance. [45] As well as highlighting the fact that forestry statistics need to be treated with a degree of caution, these

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[41] Formery, 'Quelques observations,' 1.
[42] Ibid. For the situation in Grenoble see ADI 2101 W 28 'Procès-verbal de la réunion du 8 janvier 1942.' See also CHAN AJ [39] 54 'Prescriptions et Directives du Commissaire Général.' *Bulletin périodique officiel des Chantiers de la Jeunesse*, No. 54, 18 August 1941, 1-5.
[43] Formery, 'Quelques observations,' 4.
[44] Pucheu *et al*, 'Réparition des bois.'
[45] ADV 1790 W 130 Boutière, Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Draguignan, 'Rapport trimestriel sur l'activité de l'Adminstration, 11 October 1943, 2; and ADBDR 194 W 30 Contrôleur Juré Bartoli, 'Rapport de vérification dans la rassort de la 26e conservation des Forêts du 5 au 21 février 1942, département des Bouches-du-Rhône,' 8.

observations also suggest that some forestry exploiters tried to by-pass official controls. In fact, some private forestry exploiters bought cut wood in order to speculate on the rising prices on the black market. In addition, according to the General Secretary of the GIF Central Committee, some new forestry exploiters had an 'incurable inaptitude' for the occupation. As a consequence, the forestry card system was reformed in an attempt to protect experienced exploiters and prevent speculation on wood stocks. [46]

Manpower shortages represented one of the biggest problems. There was a lack of experienced woodcutters (approximately thirty five percent of French woodcutters languished in German prisoner of war camps) and the new *bûcherons* were apparently unable to replicate the expertise of professional lumberjacks. [47] In the case of the Chantiers, tool shortages and the location of their designated felling sites (which were often in remote and inaccessible places), hampered efficiency and exposed tensions with the Forestry Administration. [48]

At the heart of the matter lay a conflict between the forest's material functions and its supposed educational value for French youth. This friction intensified in August 1941 when the Minister for Agriculture stipulated that forestry production needed to increase threefold and that the Chantiers were to be

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[46] ADBDR 194 W 25 G. Perdrizet, Secrétaire Général du Comité central, and Charles Colomb, Directeur Général des Eaux et Forêts, Président du Comité central des Groupements interprofessionnels forestiers, to Conservateurs régionaux des Eaux et Forêts, Présidents des Comités régionaux de gestion, Présidents des comptoirs départementaux des produits forestiers, 'Lettre Circulaire No. 144: contrôle des nouvelles déliverances de cartes professionelles-Révision des cartes antérieurement attribuées,' 25 April 1944.

[47] CACAN 19800470/168 Charles Colomb, 'Note sur les réformes nécessaries au développement de la production forestière,' 21 March 1942, 1.

[48] See 'Prescriptions et Directives du Commissaire Général,' 1-5; and CHAN AJ [39] 56 'Prescriptions et Directives du Commissaire Général,' *Bulletin périodique officiel des Chantiers de la Jeunesse*, No. 129, 1 June 1943, 521-24.

the main source of this production. [49] Foresters, however, accused the youth movement of privileging moral and social education over forestry work, even suggesting that some groups purposely ignored their instructions.[50] On the other hand, the Chantiers' leadership complained that 'the majority of [forestry] Conservators... see [the Chantiers] solely as producers of wood charcoal, whereas the overall aim that we strive towards is to make men and national propaganda through the example of a reborn patriotism. It is better, surely, to warm the hearts of French people waiting for a rallying call than to warm their bodies.' [51] In turn, the Chantiers leadership had their own grievances and accused forestry officials of being 'generally too parsimonious' and not 'taking into account the important contribution that [the Chantiers'] exploitations provide.' [52] This dispute highlights the tension between ideological concerns and more practical pressures which plagued Vichy's political programme (in chapter two, I outlined how material constraints undermined Vichy's cultivation drive). In the end, however, production imperatives overruled nationalistic education and the Chantiers leadership agreed that 'today, above all else, we must assure the country's survival.' As a consequence, Chantiers groups were told to spend less time on education in order to boost their forestry production. [53]

However, it seems that the heart of the production crisis lay less with the actual felling of trees than distribution and transportation problems. For instance,

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[49] CHAN AJ [39] 166 Mourey, Commissaire Général Adjoint, for Général de la Porte du Theil, 'Note pour Messieurs les Commissaires régionaux, 5 August 1941, 1-2.
[50] R. Berthon, 'De quelques réflexions sur le problème de la main d'oeuvre forestier,' *Revue des Eaux et Forêts* 81/9 (September 1943), 489-93.
[51] CHAN AJ [39] 168 Colonel bervété du Génie, Commissaire Général Adjoint des Chantiers de la Jeunesse, to Pierre Salvat, Inspecteur-Général des Eaux et Forêts, 4 August 1941; and CHAN AJ [39] 168 Commissaire Général des Chantiers de la Jeunesse to Inspecteur-Général des Forêts, 6 August 1941.
[52] CHAN AJ [39] 168 Commissariat Général des Chantiers de la Jeunesse, Service forestier, 'Compte-rendu,' 20 August 1941.
[53] CHAN AJ [39] 54 'Prescriptions et Directives du Commissaire Général,' 3.

in the Unoccupied Zone, 335,296 out of 818,557 steres (or cubic metres) of timber destined for German troops remained in the forests during the winter of 1940-1941. [54] In addition, other governmental departments and occupation soldiers frequently requisitioned forestry vehicles, making it hard for state and private foresters to transport timber out of the forest and into urban areas. To make matters worse, horses employed in the forests were too undernourished to work long hours. [55]

Nonetheless, it seems that French forests were heavily over-exploited during the war. In March 1942 the Touring Club of France informed the Minister of Agriculture of a 'vast enquiry' that it had recently conducted on threatened heritage sites. During this survey, numerous correspondents had expressed concerns over the intensive deforestation that is 'in part justified by current circumstances.' [56] Similarly, an article in *Le Bois National* debated whether or not to 'praise or deplore [the Chantiers'] exuberant activity' as it led to premature timber exploitation, even in areas of 'virgin forest' that were normally left unexploited. [57] Postwar figures support the overexploitation thesis, especially for firewood production. The CCDR estimated that controlled, commercial firewood production rose from pre-war levels of 10,000,000 steres to 18,000,000 steres, but admitted that the actual figure was more likely to be closer to 45,000,000 steres. [58] According to Jean Collardet, Director of Studies at the Ecole Supérieure du Bois in Paris, clearcutting had occurred in the forests of Landes, Normandy,

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[54] CACAN 19771461/41 'Prestations en bois de chauffage éffectuées aux troupes d'opération. hiver 1940-1941.'
[55] See Formery, 'Quelques observations,' 1; and various reports in ADBDR 194 W 25.
[56] CACAN 19800400/26 Général d'Armée Dosse, Administrateur Délégué du Touring Club de France en Zone libre to Ministre de l'Agriculture, 27 March 1942; and CACAN 19800400/26 Arbaud, Inspecteur-Adjoint des Eaux et forêts, Grenoble, 'Coupes abusives? Chablis,' 1 April 1942.
[57] Paul Durand, 'D'une decade à l'autre,' *Le Bois National*, 14th Year, No. 8, 15 March 1943, 95.
[58] Commission consultative, *Dommages subis par la France*, Vol. 6, 48-9.

Brittany, Vosges and Jura and production of wood for cooking and heating had at least doubled, depleting coppices, hedges, and roadside trees. [59]

The intensity of forestry exploitation varied across France. Forests located near urban centres were more likely to be over-exploited; certain ones in the Paris region were exploited over ten years in advance of the date prescribed by the Forestry Administration (the national average was two years in advance during the Occupation). [60] It also seems that where German authorities had greater access to forests, such as in the annexed region of Alsace and Lorraine, the more they were exploited. The Forestry Conservator in Strasbourg highlighted in 1947 that 'over five years the Germans exploited our forests... without taking any account of *aménagement*.' This uncontrolled felling meant that foresters in the Alsace 'had never faced such a daunting yet indispensable task' as they set about repairing the damage.[61] In contrast, officials reported little or no damage to forests in the départements of Loiret, Hautes-Pyrénées, Pyrénées-Orientales, and Savoie. [62]

Yet generalisations can prove deceiving. Between neighbouring *départements* there were substantial differences in levels of forest exploitation. For instance, in central France, production had not exceeded the prescribed possibility in Allier and Cher, whereas in neighbouring Indre the exploitations

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[59] Henry S. Kernan, 'War's Toll of French Forests,' *American Forests* 51 (September 1945), 442.
[60] Commission consultative, *Dommages subis par la France*, Vol. 6, 25.
[61] CACAN 19880470/172 Pol. Loppinet, Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Strasbourg, 'Rapport,' 28 July, 1947.
[62] CHAN F [10] 7103 Ingénieur du Génie Rural, Haute-Pyrénées, to Inspecteur-Général du Génie Rural, 'Estimation des dommages de guerre causés aux biens agricoles,' 27 June 1944; CHAN F [10] 7103 Ingénieur en chef du Génie Rural to Ministre de l'Agriculture, Délégation à la reconstitution agricole, Orléans, 10 April 1946; CACAN 19880470/172 Fourcaud, Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Carcassonne, 'Possibiltés par volume des forêts: département des Pyrénées-Orientales,' 16 June 1947; CACAN 19880470/172 J. Guinaudeau Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Nogent-sur-Vernisson, 'Possibilité par volume des forêts soumises au régime forestier,' 19 June 1944; and CACAN 19880470/172 Parlier, Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Chambéry, 'Possibilté par volume des forêts françaises,' 20 June 1947.

had been 'clearly abusive' and the 'balance' of the forests 'strongly compromised,' according to the Forestry Conservator. [63] There were also differences in production within *départements*. For the Alpes-Maritimes, Arthur Dugelay suggested that there was a big increase in firewood and wood charcoal production, although this slowed down production of construction grade timber.[64]

Although the extent of unregulated felling is difficult to assess accurately, it seems that contemporary observers were horrified by the situation. In addition to the Touring Club report, a 1944 article in *L'Action forestière et piscicole* noted how 'one remains stupefied that nothing has been done to limit the damage caused by a stupid and ferocious deforestation, to the point where the individual has lost all sense of moderation and even children cut, fell, uproot, and destroy anything that comes to hand.' [65]

Over-production also led to other forest damage, such as an increase in forest fires in Mediterranean France between 1940 and 1944, especially during 1942 and 1943. [66] While this increase can in part be attributed to drought and general material shortages, over-production was a major factor.[67] A forestry

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[63] CACAN 19880470/172 Dublois de la Sablonière, Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Bourges, 'Possibilité par volume des forêts françaises, année 1947-1948,' [n.d.].

[64] ADAM 521 W 30 Arthur Dugelay, Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Nice, 'Centenaire du Rattachement du Comité de Nice à la France: resultats acquis de 1860 à nos jours' [n.d.].

[65] Henri Vergnaud, 'Une croisade qui s'impose,' *L'Action forestière et piscicole*, No. 87, June 1944, 1.

[66] See Daniel Alexandrian and François Binggeli, *L'écologie prend le maquis: forêt, biomasse, énergie, compost* (Aix-en-Provence: Édisud, 1984), 12-13; and ADV 1790 W 130 'Inspection de Draguignan: Statistiques des Incendies de forêts de 1941 à [date missing],' [n.d.]. For historical overviews of forest fires in Mediterranean France, see Marcel Faure, 'Les incendies de forêt dans l'histoire: quelques leçons du passé,' *Forêt mediterranéenne* 9/2 (1987), 189; and Jean-Claude Istre, 'Y avait-il moins d'incendies de forêts autrefois?' *Forêt mediterranéenne* 8/1 (1986), 67-9. For wider considerations of forest fires, see Stephen J. Pyne, *Fire: A Brief History* (London: The British Museum Press, 2001); and Les écologists de l'Euzière, *Le feu dans la nature: mythes et réalités* (Prades-le-Lez: Éditions les écologists de l'Euzière [n.d.]).

[67] Local people were sometimes reluctant to risk ruining irreplaceable clothes and shoes battling forest fires, and food shortages may also have discouraged some individuals from helping, given that fire-fighting 'demanded a huge expense of energy'. See ADBDR 76 W 33 Lieutenant-

official in Nice believed that wartime over-exploitation of the forest was 'without doubt' a major cause of forest fire outbreaks in 1941. [68] Wood charcoal posed a particular problem as charcoal burners used ovens in the heart of the forest. To make matters worse, they were often inexperienced and neglected to survey their furnaces properly, at least according to a Gendarme report in the Var. [69] An angry Forestry Inspector in Draguignan emphasised the absurdity of allowing charcoal burning in the summer, noting that to produce 4,000 tons of wood charcoal, charcoal burners had destroyed over 300,000 cubic metres of wood; 'under the pretext of maintaining production, are we going to push unlawfulness to the point of destroying the raw material [needed for] production?' He called for action against 'the idleness and individualism' of local populations, sanctions against the irresponsible instigators of the fires, and a fight against administrative inertia. The Inspector admitted that this was not a 'placid' report but one written 'under the still burning impression of a disaster that is currently ruining this beautiful *pays*, previously one of the most wooded of France.' [70] In a further report, the same Inspector stated that local town halls were allowing too much charcoal burning in the forests, thereby 'compromising for twenty-five years the

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Colonel Bergognon, Commandant provt. la 15e Légion de Gendarmerie to Préfet Régional, 'Rapport sur les causes survenus dans la région de Marseille dans le courant de l'été 1942,' 4 September 1942. 2; ADV 1790 W 130 Boutière, Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Draguignan, 'Rapport: dévastation de la partie orientale des Maures,' 9 August 1943; and ADBDR 76 W 33 Chef d'Escadron Hurtrel, Commandant la Compagnie du Var, 'Rapport sur les incendies de forêt dans le département du Var,' 29 August 1942. For food shortages see ADAM 109 W 8 Le chef du Service départemental des Incendies de Forêts, 'Directives Générale pour la lutte contre les incendies de forêts dans le cadre des groupements de communes,' 9 May 1944.

[68] ADAM 521 W 50 Inspecteur Principal des Eaux et Forêts, Nice Ouest, 'Exploitations et incendies: lettre de M. Autran,' 19 February 1943, 2.

[69] Hurtrel, 'Rapport sur les incendies de forêt.'

[70] ADV 1790 W 130 Boutière, 'Dévastation de la partie orientale des Maures.'

production of wood and wood charcoal.' [71] These were by no means isolated cases. [72]

Forestry officials lobbied local authorities to put in place measures to limit the damage charcoal burners and other forest workers caused, especially 'at a time when the necessity to safeguard our forestry resources is becoming more and more apparent.' [73] In addition, the Forestry Administration made representations to local authorities asking for state funds to combat fires and for tougher action to be taken against those responsible for starting fires. [74] A 1941 forestry report called for the implementation of 'draconian discipline' concerning the use of fire in the forest; 'constant surveillance and rigorous sanctions' should be applied against both civilian and military offenders,' it argued. [75] Local authorities did heed such warnings and introduced measures to prevent forest fires. The Prefect of the Var ordered that *gazogène* owners must only load and empty fuel into their vehicles at a distance of over 200 metres away from the forest (increased to 400 metres during the summer). [76]

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[71] ADV 1790 W 130 Boutière, Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Draguignan, 'Rapport trimestriel sur l'activité de l'Administration,' 11 October 1943, 2.

[72] For other examples of charcoal burners starting forest fires see ADAM 521 W 57 Commissaire de Police de Vallauris to Préfet des Alpes-Maritimes, Service des Incendies de Forêts, 'Feu de forêt,' 5 June 1943; ADAM 521 W 57 Adjoint délégué de Maire de Peille to Chef de Service de Incendies de Forêts, 27 June 1943; and ADBDR 76 W 33 Chef d'Escadron Tainturier, Compagnie de Vaucluse; 'Rapport sur les incendies de forêts dans le département de Vaucluse,' 29 August 1942.

[73] ADAM 521 W 57 Beaucerie, Garde-Général des Eaux et Forêts, Nice Ouest, 'Rapport: Carbonisation en forêt: demande de renforcement des précautions imposées pour éviter les incendies,' 25 April 1942.

[74] ADAM 521 W 50 Villiers, Inspecteur-Principal des Eaux et Forêts, Nice Ouest, 'Rapport: exploitations et incendies, lettre d'Autran, 19 February 1943; and ADAM 521 W 57 Villiers, Inspecteur-Principal des Eaux et Forêts, Nice Ouest, 'Rapport: dépenses causées pour la surveillance, la protection et la lutte contre les incendies de Forêts: subvention au département,' 3 December 1943.

[75] ADAM 109 W 8 Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, 'Rapport: incendies de Forêts,' 8 May 1941, 1.

[76] During hot weather, *gazogène* owners were obliged to carry five litres of water and a fire extinguisher. ADV 1790 W 125 Préfet du Var to Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Aix-en-Provence, 'Forêts: circulation des véhicles à gazogène,' 24 September 1940; and ADV 1790 W 125 'Étude sur les measures à prendre [illegible] la lutte contre les incendies de forêts' [n.d.].

Chapter Three

Controlling fire during the "dark years" was a difficult yet vital task. For although heightened forestry production increased the likelihood of forest fires, it was also undermined by them. Consequently, one Forestry Inspector described fire-fighting as a battle:

> In our opinion, the site of a forest fire should be treated like a battlefield and the fight [against it] organised along the principles of a veritable strategy. It must be as defensive (preparation of fallback positions through the creation of firebreak trenches, waiting for the fire in these positions, etc....) as it is offensive and immediate... in short, fire, especially in areas broken up by valleys and cliffs, is an... enemy... which must be the object of constant surveillance and fought with direct and rapid measures. [77]

In the eyes of state foresters, fire threatened both the forests' productivity and future survival, and its intensification between 1940 and 1944 represented a serious challenge to their ability to control the forest. But fire was just one of the Forestry Administration's "enemies" as it battled to maintain and manage a planned forest during the war.

Aménagement in wartime

In 1940, the Forestry Administration declared itself ready to serve France; 'the forestry corps, severely depleted (*durement touché*), is not defeated. *Au contraire*, it must play an important role in the reconstruction of the country.' [78] The administration's ranks were indeed depleted. In the long term, it had lost

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[77] ADAM 521 W 50 Villiers, Inspecteur-Principal des Eaux et Forêts, Nice Ouest, 'Rapport: Organisation de la lutte contre les incendies de forêts,' 6 August 1941. *Le Bois National* also described fire as a 'fearful enemy.' Paul Durand, 'D'une decade à l'autre,' *Le Bois National*, 14th Year, No. 12, 25 April 1943, 141-2.
[78] 'Chronique forestier,' 323.

thirteen percent of its officers in the First World War yet still had responsibility for reforestation programmes, Alpine restoration, the regulation of hunting, and monitoring water pollution in interwar France.[79] The 1939-1940 war further depleted its ranks; five of its staff were reportedly killed in combat and sixty taken prisoner of war by Germany.[80] This was a considerable number for an administration with a staff of 678 in 1935.[81]

For state foresters, serving the nation implied the continuation of their forestry management principles. Since at least Colbert's 1669 forestry ordinance, the Forestry Administration had pursued a policy of forest *aménagement*, which Tamara Whited describes as a strategy of 'organising a forest for a specific purpose,' such as timber production or preventing landslides. With these aims in mind, foresters employed the *tire-et-aire* method, which divided the forest into areas of exploitation to be felled in rotation, leaving mature trees standing to ensure forest regeneration.[82] While it may make claims to be an objective science, it is important to bear in mind that *aménagement* is based on the forester's self-declared ability to assess the long term utility and health of the forest and prescribe the necessary measures to ensure its development.[83]

The principle of *aménagement* stood in opposition to traditional peasant practices in the forest, in particular the pasturing of animals and "gardening" (or *jardinage*), a technique geared to local woodland conditions. Peter Sahlins argues that during the nineteenth century the Forestry Administration believed *jardinage*

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[79] Whited, *Forests and Peasant Politics in Modern France*, 181-2.
[80] 'Chronique forestier,' *Revue des Eaux et Forêts* 78/7-9 (July-September 1940), 323.
[81] Gérard Buttoud, *Les Conservateurs des Eaux-et-Forêts sous la Troisème République, 1870-1940* (Nancy: Laboratoire d'Économie forestière de l'École nationale du Génie Rural et des Eaux et Forêts, 1981), 12.
[82] Whited, *Forests and Peasant Politics*, 22-3.
[83] See Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 117.

produced a disorderly and ravaged 'forest' whereas *aménagement* created order and regulated the forest. In other words, as Sahlins continues, it involved laying 'boundary markers and carving up rationally, geometrically, in a pure Cartesian logic, the space of the forest.' [84] By the 1930s, some foresters had recognised that *jardinage* had a role in maintaining forests on mountain slopes, but as a whole the administration privileged "ordered" and "rational" forestry management to ensure production and guarantee the future of the forest.

Yet between 1940 and 1944, the demands on the forest threatened to undermine its future. Arthur Dugelay, Forestry Inspector in Nice, argued that it was 'legitimate' to feel worried about the intensification of forestry production which threatened the 'production of the next few years as well as the future' of forests in the Alpes-Maritimes. There was hope in areas where forestry exploitation was carefully controlled and forest cover was thick, but as woodlands in the Alpes-Maritimes were often sparse and impoverished it seemed to Dugelay that their 'future has been clearly compromised.' [85]

Aménagement, however, proved itself flexible during the "dark years." Despite concerns, such as those of Dugelay, that wartime over-exploitation compromised the future of some forests, foresters adapted *aménagement* to meet the increased demands that economic conditions placed on the forest. Instructions were sent to conservators at various points instructing them to 'subordinate the application of ***aménagement*** to the current necessities of production.' [86]

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[84] Peter Sahlins, *Forest Rites: The War of the Demoiselles in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 50-53.
[85] Dugelay, 'Les deboisements et les reboisements dans les Alpes-Maritimes (suite),' 166.
[86] CACAN 19800470/168 Conservateur des Forêts, Chef du 2ème Bureau, 'Note pour Monsieur l'Inspecteur-Adjoint Proust, réponse à la demande de renseignements du 17 avril 1942, relative au rapport No. 33 du Commissaire du Pouvoir Formery,' 21 April 1942.

And on a local level, it seems that foresters were well aware of the need for productive forests, and so opened up forestry camps and involved themselves directly in forestry production. They were ready, in the words of the Conservator in Grenoble, 'to make, when needed, the necessary sacrifices for the general interest.' [87] At times, this placed them in dispute with local communities. In the town of Pradet in the Var, the organiser of local fuel supplies wrote to the Secretary of State for the Interior in December 1941 asking permission to chop down a forest which 'in winter totally obscures sunlight and keeps the houses in [a state] of extraordinary humidity, which can not be countered due to the lack of fuel.' Notably, local forestry officials only opposed the move because the forest belonged to private owners. They suggested, instead, that wood be taken from the communal forest, even though it needed time to rejuvenate. While they were prepared to tolerate 'some abuses from the forestry point of view' in light of the economic situation, they covered their backs with instructions from the Director General of the Forestry Administration reminding them that 'it is momentarily of an absolute vital necessity for the country to intensify wood production by all available means and we are obliged to put the needs of production before all other considerations.' [88] Elsewhere, the mayor of Mougins (Alpes-Maritimes) complained that an 'entrepreneur' was chopping down trees along the Route Napoleon thereby 'prejudicing the beauty of the landscape.' The local forestry

[87] ADI 2109 W 64 Gobert, Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Grenoble, to Préfet de l'Isère, 'Rapport: bois de feu,' 19 May 1944.
[88] ADAM 521 W 9 Inspecteur des Forêts, Chef de Service, Toulon to Lambert, Secrétaire du Comptoir des Produits Forestiers, Draguignan, 'Commune de Pradet: besoins en bois de chauffage,' 29 December 1941.

official dismissed the complaint as the change to the landscape would only be temporary. [89]

At times, adapting *aménagement* to increase production placed the Forestry Administration in conflict with others who pressed for the preservation of France's forests. Commenting on the afore-mentioned Touring Club survey, one forester stressed that no 'abusive felling' had taken place in state forests, even if the administration had modified the timber cutting regime to increase production. Consequently, he felt it was 'unfair to say that the designation of cuts made by our service is abusive, above all at a time when the intensification of forestry production is demanded of us.' [90]

More significantly, the Forestry Administration opposed calls in 1942 to create a 500 hectare nature reserve in Tronçais forest (the reserve's advocates claimed that this would preserve an area that displayed the 'character of the true French forest'[91]). Foresters argued that the existence of a forest entirely free from human intervention was 'essentially theoretical' and, in economic terms, Tronçais was 'one of the jewels of the French forest economy.' [92] They prioritised the current demands of the wartime economy as the forest needed to be 'used and adapted to satisfy our needs with regard to current contingences,' and, in the end, the Tronçais proposal was rejected.[93] This decision displeased Jacques Chevalier, a self-appointed defender of Tronçais, who believed that the reserve would have been 'particularly opportune at this moment when our forest

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[89] ADAM 521 W 7 Caubel, Inspecteur-Adjoint des Eaux et Forêts, Nice Ouest, 'Rapport: commune de Mougins, réclamation de Monsieur le Maire,' 12 November 1940.
[90] Dosse to Ministre de l'Agriculture; and Arbaud, 'Coupes abusives?'
[91] CACAN 19800400/15 Secretaire Général and Président, Société d'Emulation du Bourbonnais to Jacques Chevalier, 7 July 1941.
[92] CACAN 19800400/15 Directeur de l'Ecole Nationale Forestière to Directeur Général des Forêts, Chasse et Pêche, 'Projet de réserve naturelle en forêt de Tronçais,' 27 April 1942.
[93] Ibid; and CACAN 19800400/15 Directeur Général des Eaux et Forêts to Pierre Salvat, Inspecteur Général des Eaux et Forêts, 'Constitution d'une réserve naturelle dans la forêt dominale de Tronçais,' 3 June 1942.

is subjected to intensive exploitations.' [94] As the case of Tronçais demonstrates, *aménagement* was not a synonym for forest preservation. [95]

However, more *dirigiste* elements within the government attacked the effectiveness of the Forestry Administration and *aménagement*. In March 1942, Formery produced a report questioning the administration's competence, arguing that it was overwhelmed by events and unable to exert its authority over private foresters. Most damagingly, Formery believed that its inefficiency was holding back forestry production. He went so far as to suggest that 'perhaps [France] needs a wood dictator.' Formery explicitly attacked *aménagement*, stating that forestry 'conservators mustn't be so miserly, and they must forget the peacetime principles of "aménagement." It is no longer the time to fear the destruction of the [forest].' Given workforce and transportation problems, Formery argued that it was time to abandon felling in remote places, even if prescribed by forest management principles. Instead, foresters 'must – even against the wishes of the owner – exploit to the maximum, down to the ground, all that is close to roads, sawmills, and railway stations.' [96]

In contrast, traditionalists within the government lauded the Forestry Administration's stewardship of French forests. Caziot argued that it was 'without doubt the sole administration that is superior to private owners for the management of our heritage. Only it can conceive long plans and steadfastly maintain them over the centuries.' [97] Caziot's comments are predictable, as the

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[94] To be fair to Chevalier, he did recognise the reasons behind the intensification of forestry production. CACAN 19800400/15 Jacques Chevalier to Pierre Salvat, Inspecteur Général des Eaux et Forêts, 15 July 1942.

[95] In the nineteenth century, tensions had already existed between foresters and preservationists with regard to Fontainebleu forest. See Ford 'Nature, Culture and Conservation,' 183-4.

[96] Formery, 'Quelques observations,' 1, 4-6.

[97] 'Visite de la forêt domaniale de Tronçais par le chef de l'État,' *Revue des Eaux et Forêts*, 79/1 (January 1941), 59.

Forestry Administration lay within the Ministry of Agriculture, but they clearly expose the tensions between traditionalists and technocrats that lay at the heart of the Vichy regime.

Through the Forestry Administration, Vichy aimed to turn the forest into an increasingly regulated space to maximise forestry production. As such, its vision of the forest seems to correspond with James Scott's argument that states reduce forests to sources of revenue and resources. According to Scott, the state's vision of the forest excludes its social uses and meanings (as a space for hunting, pasturing, worship, and refuge) treating it solely as 'an economic resource to be managed efficiently and profitably.'[98] While Scott's analysis is relevant to Vichy, it is also reductive, as traditional elements within the regime located meanings in the forest that went beyond production concerns. For Vichy, the forest was both an ideological and productive space. Moreover, between 1940 and 1944, the forest became a site of ideological contestation as both Vichy and the resistance appropriated it for political ends. In both cases, Forestry Administration officials played a role, demonstrating that they weren't solely motivated by apolitical, technocratic principles of forest management. I turn first to Vichy's mobilisation of the forest.

Vichy in the forest

The Vichy regime incorporated the forest into its "back to the land" ethos making it a traditional, stable place to be mobilised as part of its plans to morally regenerate France. Jacques Chevalier, conservative philosopher and Minister for

[98] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 11-13.

Public Instruction between December 1940 and February 1941, considered that 'life in the forest is the most healthy there is for the body and the soul, freeing us from the artifices of modern society.' [99] He suggested that "eternal" France resides in the forest. The forest, therefore, constituted:

> A living symbol of tradition, perpetuating history; old France is preserved better here than anywhere else; the present unites effortlessly with the past. In the silence and depth of the forest centuries replace one another, slowly, continuously, in the same way that the oak's sapwood binds a new layer to those of springs and autumns past. [100]

For Chevalier, trees represented a link between France's past and present and acted as a guarantor of French traditions. Chevalier's musings on trees and tradition are by no means uncharacteristic of the symbolic appropriation of trees. As Douglas Davies suggests, the tree is 'a living entity, spanning many human generations. As such it avails itself as a historical marker and social focus of events.' [101]

In keeping with Vichy's ruralism, forestry associations strove to incorporate the forest within the "National Revolution." Just after the defeat, J. Jagerschmidt, the General Secretary of the Comité des forêts argued that the forest was a 'refuge of [the] old principles' of Travail, Famille, Patrie. For Jagerschmidt, the forest epitomised the working spirit that the regime tried to foster because 'woodcutters and charcoal burners laughed at the paid holidays

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[99] Jacques Chevalier, *La forêt de Tronçais en Bourbonnais* (Paris: Éditions de la Chronique des Lettres françaises, 1940), 2.
[100] Ibid. 6.
[101] Douglas Davies, 'The Evocative Symbolism of Trees,' in Denis E. Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (eds.), *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design, and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 34. See also Stephen Daniels, 'The Political Iconography of Woodland in Later Georgian England,' in the same volume.

and forty hour week that the [Third Republic] wanted to impose on them.' Forest workers did not need to be told to work 'from sunrise to sunset.' Family and forest also went together, according to Jagerschmidt because the forest was a 'symbol of tradition...of which the evolutionary rhythm exceeds several times the length of human life, [so] chimes perfectly well with the notion of the family, the linking of successive generations.' Furthermore, it was in the depths of the forest that the country's 'heart' belonged. [102] It is unclear whether such rhetoric represents deeply held beliefs or lip service to the newly-installed regime. Either way, the forest's politicisation is evident. The irony was, however, that such "back to the land" rhetoric simultaneously politicised the forest and constructed it as a space of "natural" (and therefore apolitical) values and traditions.

In a similar way to the peasant, the *bûcheron* (or woodcutter) was constructed as a patriotic figure labouring to regenerate France. Working in the forest was one way to strengthen male bodies and remake masculinity in post-defeat France (see also chapter five). [103] Two state foresters, Roger Blais and Gérard Luzu, published a guide to the 'tough school' (*rude école*) of the forest, which presented forestry work as the most 'radical' return to the land and 'an integral part of rural reconstruction.' Blais and Luzu highlighted the 'physical and moral enrichment' the forester gleaned from the forest, 'contributing to the affirmation of values and personal autonomy within the framework of nature's laws and collective life.' In contrast to the comforts offered by the city and the forty-hour working week, life in the forest was 'hard and healthy' and

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[102] J. Jagerschmidt, 'Le programme forestier de la France qui va renaître,' *L'Action forestière et piscicole*, Nos. 39 and 40, July 1940, 1.

[103] Elsewhere, foresters had also been linked to "ideal" forms of masculinity. Kevin Hannam argues that the forest officer in India matched Victorian ideals of masculinity through their 'virile stoicism and muscular endurance.' See 'Utilitarianism and the Indian Forest Service,' *Environment and History* 6/2 (2000): 222.

woodcutting a 'noble and free occupation.' Blais and Luzu also called for the forestry profession to conform to the principles of 'social spirit and true hierarchy as outlined by the head of state.' [104] In addition, a 1943 article in *Revue des Eaux et Forêts* argued that 'living in nature' is the 'best school' and working in forestry teams countered individualism and selfishness, as it cultivated the qualities of 'sacrifice and charity.'[105] In both cases, the vision of forest life chimed with Vichy's assumption that hard work was redemptive and served a national purpose.

Likewise, the forestry work of the Chantiers de la Jeunesse contained an ideological dimension as it was supposed to ensure young men's moral and physical regeneration. The Chantiers leadership viewed the forest as a safe and wholesome place, distant from the supposed immorality and decadence of modern society that reached its zenith in the city. From the outset, the Chantiers strove to remove its recruits from the 'deleterious influence of the towns' by making them camp out 'in the great outdoors (*en pleine nature*), in the middle of the forest, hidden from all forms of trouble or agitation.' [106]

The forest supposedly held important lessons for these young men, as it did for the rest of society. At Tronçais, Group One of the Chantiers dedicated a tree to their leader, Commissaire Furioux. In his speech during the ceremony, Forestry Inspector Desjeux pronounced that 'it is through the living example of the forest, an example of tradition, continuity, and grandeur that [Furioux] wanted to impress on all those who had the honour of obeying [his] orders.' In a similar vein, Forestry Conservator Pascaud used his speech to identify the

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[104] Blais et Luzu, *Metiers de la forêt*, 5, 56-8, 61.
[105] Berthon, 'De quelques réflexions sur le problème de la main d'oeuvre forestier,' 489-93.
[106] CHAN AJ [39] 166 'Allocution prononcée devant chacun des Groupements (18[e] Région) de la Jeunesse Française (du 1e et 11e août) – 30 à 35 Groupements-16,000 hommes,' [n.d.]; and CHAN AJ [39] 177 de la Porte du Theil, *Les Chantiers de la Jeunesse*, 6.

forest's exemplary demonstration of 'solidarity.' In particular, the oak tree towering serenely above surrounding trees protects them so that they grow to share the 'light in which he bathes.'[107] Addressing the Chantiers, Pascaud continued:

> This solidarity of all plants, is it not the image of the best of societies where the leader must dominate in his pre-eminence while feeling himself surrounded, supported, [and] aided [by his followers]? If his entourage fails him, he succumbs, whatever his qualities. Let us remember this example at a moment when divisions lie in wait for us.[108]

There was, however, some discrepancy between the regime's rhetoric and the reality of forest life. The Chantiers' leaders were well aware of the young men's indifference, even outright hostility, to their new role as woodcutters. A 1943 report recognised that the early 'competition for output' and the Chantiers' 'mentality of explorers out to discover new lands' had since dissipated. Instead, the men no longer recognised the 'usefulness of their work' and the leadership itself admitted that 'forestry work, interesting at first, quickly becomes monotonous, [and] tedious. Their hearts are not in the felling. Boredom is the dominant characteristic.'[109] The joys, it seems, of being a woodcutter were lost on those forced to work in the forests.

Nonetheless, the image of the stately oak leading and protecting his followers was a popular one. Yvonne Esteinne's illustrated story *La belle histoire d'un chêne* (1943) compared France to a forest that had just been struck by a fierce storm. During the storm, trees swayed alarmingly in the wind and petrified birds and animals rushed to find shelter; 'all the forest is unhappy. It looks for

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[107] Chantiers de la Jeunesse, Groupement No. 1, *Inauguration en forêt dominale de Tronçais du chêne dédié au commissaire Furioux, fondateur de groupement no.1*, 22 November 1943.
[108] Ibid.
[109] CHAN AJ [39] 56 'Prescriptions et directives du Commissaire Général,' *Bulletin périodique officiel des Chantiers de la Jeunesse*, No. 129, 1 June 1943, 529.

help.' Help came from the forest's leader, a 'tall, solid, upright tree' who fears nothing and protects its charges. In case her young readers had missed the analogy, Esteinne moved the story onto contemporary events, noting how during the military defeat the French had fled from the enemy and its bombs 'like the rabbits of the wood.' But luckily for France there was hope: 'there existed, as well, in the forest of France – because men [sic] resemble trees – a tall, beautiful oak, already old but so valiant that he stood strong to protect everybody. And this tall, beautiful oak was called Marshall Pétain.' Helpfully, the Pétain oak tree carefully explained where the forest had gone wrong and how it should reform itself. [110]

This ideological appropriation of the forest perhaps reached its high point in Tronçais where an oak tree was named after Pétain on the initiative of Chevalier (his godson) and in the presence of forestry officials. Like the supposedly exceptional qualities of Pétain, the oak tree chosen to bear his name stood out from the rest; it stood thirty-five metres high, was 260 years old, and boasted good foliage. During the naming ceremony, Pétain unveiled a plaque bearing the words "Chêne Maréchal Pétain" and made three marks on the tree with a Forestry Administration hammer. On one level, this event can be interpreted within the framework of the cult of personality created around Pétain, who admitted that he hoped that he would be able to 'remain as upright as this tree in order to be able to devote [himself] to the service of the country.' The ceremony also implied that Pétain, like his oak tree, embodied the latest in a vulnerable line of strong, upright men devoted to France. As Chevalier noted

[110] Yvonne Esteinne, illustrated by M. de Montfalcon, *La belle histoire d'un chêne* (Grenoble: Éditions de la Revue "Les Alpes," 1943).

during the ceremony, 'who could doubt a country which produces such trees and such men?'[111]

But beyond the construction of Pétain's cult of personality, it is not too fanciful to see this marking of the tree as a performative device to reinforce the importance of the forest and the state's claim to govern it. The occasion also served as a reminder of the forest's historical role as "saviour" of France. During the ceremony, Chevalier reminded his audience that this ancient forest provided wood for the navy in 1793 and timber for the army in 1917. [112] Caziot, in a speech prepared for the ceremony, also emphasised that the forest was a productive space of 'exceptional value for the material reconstruction of the country.' [113] Now that France had crumbled under German invasion, Tronçais (and other forests) were to enable the nation to recover its former glory.

Furthermore, the ceremony suggested that Tronçais, which the state had replanted in the late seventeenth century, was physical evidence that France could rebuild itself under Vichy's guidance. Caziot called for a contemporary display of determination equal to that of foresters who had replanted Tronçais:

> The state of the Tronçais forest in 1670, was it not the image of France today, of the ravaged France, morally demolished by more than half a century of hideous demagogy? The war then added its own disasters. Today, everything must be remade, morally and materially. It is a fearsome task and one which demands long and patient effort as the rot runs deep. But the base has remained healthy and solid and allows for hope... On this

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[111] Chevalier, *La forêt de Tronçais*, 155. See also Inspecteur Dubois de la Sablonière, 'Le maréchal Pétain en Forêt de Tronçais.' *Revue des Eaux et Forêts*, 79/ 2 (February 1941), 126-7.
[112] Chevalier, *La forêt de Tronçais*, 154.
[113] Apparently, the speech was not delivered during the ceremony due to time constraints. It was, however, published in the *Revue des Eaux et Forêts*. See 'Visite de la Forêt domaniale de Tronçais,' 59-60. The productive nature of the forest was also highlighted by the Chantiers de la Jeunesse, who claimed that for them Tronçais 'evokes [our] work in the forest and in particular charcoal burning which has reached record figures.' CHAN AJ [39] 1 [n.a.] 'Les Chantiers de la Jeunesse,' [n.d.].

> solid base, which is the foundation of France, we can, in the image of Tronçais, remake a vigorous and healthy France. The oak which bears [Pétain's] name must be a lesson and a symbol for everyone. [114]

In this speech, Caziot compared the Third Republic with the damaged pre-1670 forest, but suggested that all was not lost because the forest's essential nature (like France's) had remained intact. There is also a sense that the forest's and France's "true" essence lay beneath the surface of democracy and modernity, waiting to be recovered and restored. Such an assumption supports Herman Lebovics' analysis of the right-wing construction of "True France," a 'discourse [that] employs the essentialist determinist language of a lost hidden authenticity that, once uncovered, yields a single, immutable national identity.' [115]

Yet the forest's political symbolism need not be reactionary. Vichy's appropriation of the oak tree echoed previous state manipulation of this species. Ironically, given Vichy's hostility to the French Republic, in the years following the French Revolution, oaks were moulded into "Liberty Trees." And like Vichy, revolutionary governments elevated the oak to the status of a 'beacon tree,' controlling (and sheltering) surrounding trees. [116] Moreover, French resistance units occupied the forest's physical and symbolic space, transforming it into a site of resistance and reclaiming it from Vichy.

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[114] 'Visite de la Forêt domaniale de Tronçais,' 59-60.
[115] Lebovics, *True France*, 9.
[116] Andrée Corvol, 'The Transformation of a Political Symbol: Tree Festivals in France from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Centuries,' *French History* 4/4 (1990), 463-5.

The resistance reclaims the forest

As the Occupation dragged on, resistance fighters identified the forest as a place to seek refuge and a base from which to oppose the Vichy regime and the occupier. In some ways this manifested itself symbolically. At Tronçais in February 1943, a resister reportedly scaled Pétain's oak, replacing the plaque bearing the Marshall's name with the following:

> Chêne Gabriel Peri
>
> French Patriot
>
> Shot by the Nazis. [117]

Consequently, Pétain's oak is now officially known as the 'Oak of the Resistance.' [118] But beyond this symbolic act, the resistance reclaimed the forest in more material ways.

The wartime economy and Vichy's attempts to boost forestry production ironically aided the resistance as the increased number of forestry camps provided excellent cover. The resistance therefore had a physical presence in the forests as camps provided shelter and employment for young men evading compulsory labour in Germany, as well as for foreign refugees, Jews escaping deportation, and other would-be maquisards. One important example is the Pélanq forestry camp in the Var, created by Daniel Ungemach ("Bénédicte"), Dr Paul Schmierer, Roger Taillefer and Inspector DuChamp of the Forestry

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[117] Roger Chassaingt, *La vie en forêt de Tronçais de juin 1940 à octobre 1944* (Nice: published by the author, 1999), 102. Chassaingt dismisses reports that resisters opened fire on Pétain's oak.

[118] 'La forêt de Tronçais,' Office National des Forêts website, http://www.onf.fr/foret/dossier/troncais/3-p1.htm, consulted 10 November 2005.

Administration. [119] Under the scheme they devised, Bénédicte hired employees and fed and lodged them, while the Forestry Administration covered salaries and bought the timber and wood charcoal that the camp produced. And although Pélanq didn't generate much revenue, it did become something of a flagship forestry camp in the Var. [120] Tensions did, however, exist between the camp's leaders and the Forestry Administration, as the former accused the latter of not providing enough material support and of 'shamefully exploiting' them. [121] Leaving aside these differences and the fact that the camp never fought as a unit (although many of its members took part in Liberation battles), all bar one the Pélanquois survived the war. As such, according to a Forestry Inspector who visited the camp, 'the unique experience of the state-run camp of Pélanq was an exceptional success *as much from the human* as the forestry point of view.' [122]

In the Vercors, forestry camps and charcoal burning operations provided cover for those trying to keep a discreet profile. As Philippe Hanus notes, many of these clandestine workers subsequently 'entered into dissidence' and became active in the resistance. [123] For instance, the Ambel farm forestry camp on the massif's western flank was a large-scale venture where up to 150 men could be employed at any one time, many of whom were Polish and Jewish refugees. [124] But although these new forestry workers lived outside the law, this did not mean that the rules of the forest were totally disregarded. At the Gèves maquis camp in

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[119] For more on the background to the camp see Jean-Marie Guillon, 'La Résistance dans le Var: Essai d'histoire politique,' PhD diss. University of Aix-en-Provence (1989), Part 3, Chapter 2, 5-6. "Bénédicte" was the former leader of the Marseille section of the Centre américain de secours.
[120] ADV 1 J 240 'Le Pélanq selon Bénédicte,' November 1983, 5-7, 20.
[121] Taillefer was particularly critical. See ADV 1 J 240 'Le Pélanq selon Taillefer,' May 1983.
[122] Quoted in 'Le Pélanq selon Bénédicte,' 23. Emphasis in original.
[123] Philippe Hanus, *Je suis né charbonnier dans le Vercors: petite histoire des hommes dans la forêt* (Lans-en-Vercors: CPIE Vercors, 2000), 122-3
[124] Ironically, a German company took over the exploitation at Ambel in February 1944 so the maquisards' timber production fed the German war machine. See Ibid. 123-4. See also Lieutenant Stephen, *Vercors: Premier Maquis de France* (Valence: Imprimerie Nouvelle, 1991), 26, 86-7.

the Vercors, felling was reportedly conducted with the advice of forestry guards who selected which trees to cut to maintain the forest's 'balance.' [125]

The examples of Pélanq and the Vercors are suggestive of the ways in which the figure of the *bûcheron* was incorporated into the resistance, subverting Vichy's politicalisation of the woodcutter. There were, however, similarities between the attitudes of resisters and Vichy propaganda towards life in the forest. Both recognised that the life of the *bûcheron* was demanding. According to Taillefer, daily life at Pélanq was extremely difficult. Food and water were in short supply and there were 'numerous injuries.' Consequently, heroism and fortitude manifested themselves in the camp less in its role as a *maquis* than in the 'bloody hands of our inexperienced bûcherons.' [126] Bénédicte was more positive, celebrating the *bûcheron's* noble character and his 'hard but pure' work, which was somewhat reminiscent of Vichy rhetoric. [127]

Like Vichy, some resisters recognised the transformative qualities of life in the forest. For instance, Lieutenant Stephan, an experienced woodcutter and resister at Ambel, believed that the 'rude life of the forest' was an effective preparation for fighting the occupier. [128] Certain resisters also shared the notion with Vichy that working in the forest was a connection with "authenticity." For instance, one young *maquisard* at Ambel explained to Stephan why he was so attracted to the life of the *bûcheron*:

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[125] Hanus, *Je suis né charbonnier dans le Vercors*, 124.
[126] Quoted in 'Le Pélanq selon Bénédicte,' 13.
[127] One member of the camp apparently wrote to Bénédicte in 1945 admitting that he would 'happily exchange [his] current situation to go back to the time when [he] was a *bûcheron*.' 'Le Pélanq selon Bénédicte,' 13-4, 35. For a wider exploration of the ideological links between Vichy and the resistance, see Christopher Flood, 'Pétain and de Gaulle: Making the Meanings of Occupation,' in Valerie Holman and Debra Kelly, *France at War in the Twentieth Century: Propaganda, Myth, and Metaphor* (New York: Berghahn, 2000), 88-110; and Dominique Veillon, 'The Resistance and Vichy' in S. Fishman *et al*, *France at War*, 161-77.
[128] Stephan, *Vercors*, 26.

> One feels better for being in contact with concrete realities. To know exactly what is in front of you; to battle against demanding difficulties, but ones which don't deceive [you]; to measure, each day, your victory against a beautiful and noble material; to have the feeling that this adversary [the tree] against which you are going to measure yourself has waited for you for perhaps a century; [and] that nature has nourished it with its sap, rain, wind... is that not beautiful? [129]

But although there were similarities between Vichy and the resistance's symbolic appropriation of the woodcutter, their aims were diametrically opposed. The former was designed to support the regime, the latter to bring it down.

Numerous foresters were present at the naming of the Chêne Pétain in November 1940, but as the years passed increasing numbers of them turned towards resistance. Although it is difficult to assess the full extent of this resistance activity, there are some clues. The May 1945 edition of *Revue des Eaux et Forêts* lists five foresters (of Inspector and Inspector-Adjoint ranks) killed by the 'enemy' between the armistice and Liberation. Although unconfirmed, presumably the reason for many of these deaths was resistance activity. Subsequent issues of the journal carried obituaries of foresters 'killed for France' (*morts pour la France*) while Lieutenant-Colonel Daviron praised the 'most precious support' that foresters had offered to the resistance, such as the 'concealment of military officers and *réfractaires*, the installation of camps, and the provision of transport and materials.' [130] On a local level, a 1948 report on resistance and foresters in the Hautes-Alpes suggested that 'almost all forestry officials helped resistance organisations,' acting as mountain guides, liaison agents, and camp organisers. In addition, forestry buildings served as resistance

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[129] Quoted in ibid. 27.
[130] 'Chronique forestier,' *Revue des Eaux et Forêts* 83/5 (May 1945), 294. 'Chronique forestier, nécrologie: morts pour la France,' *Revue des Eaux et Forêts* 83/7 (July 1945), 419-22.

headquarters and bases and at least six foresters in the *département* bore arms against German troops. [131] As the report came from within Forestry Administration ranks, it should be treated with caution, although there is corroborating evidence from the Briançon area that foresters assisted resistance activity. [132]

The transformation of the forest into a site of resistance was not without precedent. As Robert Pogue Harrison argues, European forests have sheltered 'outcasts' of all kinds since at least the Middle Ages. [133] Similarly, Philippe Barrier argues that the history of outlaws and (pre-Second World War) resisters indicates that forest is 'not only a base for alternative society (*contre-société*), but in times of trouble, a place of real counter power.' [134] More specifically, in nineteenth-century France, Sahlins shows how peasants in the Ariage transformed the forest into a place of revolt against state and business interests. The War of the Demoiselles was another example of how the forest became a 'site of revolt and subversion by alien and opposed elements of the structured, hierarchical social order.'[135]

It is difficult to identify direct causal links between these various histories of resistance, but it is clear that rural resisters added a new chapter to the forest's subversive character. Moreover, the participation of state foresters in resistance

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[131] ADHA 1042 W 3 Cusin, Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Gap-Est, 'Rapport: documentation pour l'Histoire de la Guerre,' 10 June 1948.
[132] See ADHA 1042 W 3 Adjoint-délégué for the maire de Briançon, 'Documentation pour l'Histoire de la guerre,' 7 June 1948.
[133] Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilisation*, 61.
[134] Philippe Barrier, *Forêt légendaire: contes, légendes, coutumes, anecdotes sur les forêts de France* (Évreux: Christian de Bartillat, 1991), 164. In other wars, resistance fighters and refugees have also taken to the forest for cover. On Vietnam, see Biggs, Managing a Rebel Landscape,' 8-11; and Stevens, *The Trail*. On Jews in Eastern Europe during the Holocaust, see Nechama Tec, 'Jewish Resistance in Belorussian Forest: Fighting and the Rescue of Jews,' in Ruby Rohrlich (ed.), *Resisting the Holocaust*, (Oxford: Berg, 1998), 77-94. Vadort estimates that twenty conflicts took place in forests across the world in 2005. Many of these involved rebel groups, such as the Karen in Myanmar (Burma). *Guerres et environnement*, 182-3.
[135] Sahlins, *Forest Rites*, 29-30.

activity is a new development in this history. Previous revolts, such as the War of Desmoiselles, were often *against* the forestry administration, whereas during the Second World War foresters used their position as agents of the state to subvert the regime and oppose foreign occupation. And, beyond such "classic" resistance activity, state foresters also opposed the actions of Italian and German troops whom they perceived as undermining forest *aménagement*.

Occupying the forest

Occupation armies and foresters held different conceptions of the forest. For the former it was a place to carry out manoeuvres and secure firewood, while for the latter it was a space to control and regulate. These wildly divergent attitudes clashed repeatedly between 1940 and 1944 (I discuss post-1944 tensions between foresters and Allied forces in chapter six). A major obstacle confronting foresters' ability to manage the forest was the establishment of military exclusion zones, which restricted the movement of forest fire surveillance teams rendering fire-fighting difficult if not impossible. [136] Although soldiers sometimes helped extinguish blazes (one town mayor praised the 'splendid attitude' of a detachment of Italian troops, including their 'drive, calmness, energy, and determination' [137]) they were, in general, an obstruction to forest fire controls and the enforcement of other regulations.

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[136] See ADAM 521 W 57 Lieutenant Lafforgue, Chef du Service des Incendies de forêt to Commandant Chaudière, Officier français de liaison près de noyau Italien de liaison et contrôle, 'Renseignements sur l'organisation du dispositions de protection contre les incendies de forêts,' [n.d.]; ADAM 521 W 57 Président de la Délégation spéciale de Castellar to Préfet des Alpes-Maritimes, 'Incendie de 3 août 1943; ADAM 521 W 57 Maire de Lucéram to Préfet des Alpes-Maritimes, 'Incendie de 3 août 1943,' 6 August 1943.

[137] ADAM 521 W 57 Maire de Turbie to Préfet des Alpes-Maritimes, 'Rapport sur une incendie qui s'est declaré dans la région du Mont Bataille,' 20 July 1943.

Foresters feared that without their presence in the forest, local communities and peasants would commit endless forestry offences. In Monaco's hinterland, an Italian commander took it upon himself to deny foresters access to the forest. The latter complained that this 'interdiction...considerably hampers surveillance of [state forests]', making it 'practically impossible to regulate offences.' [138] Another forester reported that once Italian soldiers had withdrawn for the winter months from their posts in the Haute Vallée de la Vésubie, locals had seized the chance to cut wood in the forest with no restrictions as foresters did not have the right to enter the forest (presumably in their capacity as French officials). [139]

The changing geopolitical situation caused problems for foresters. For instance, the redrawn Franco-Italian border passed through the communal forest of St-Etienne-de-Tinée and a recently replanted state forest. Foresters feared arrest if they inadvertently crossed the line, yet suspected that 'certain delinquents' among the local population would not display a 'similar prudence.' Instead they would take advantage of the lack of official surveillance to illegally fell trees and pasture their animals in the forest, thereby compromising recent plantations and provoking landslides. Foresters asked the French-Italian Armistice Commission to consider granting them access to patrol the forests (particularly as they represented no military interest) or, if that measure proved unacceptable, ensure that Italian troops increased their surveillance of the forest. Otherwise, the consequences of uncontrolled pasturing alarmed foresters; 'the state has spent huge sums [of money] on these correctional works and planting

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[138] ADAM 521 W 5 Bergogne, Inspecteur-Adjoint des Eaux et Forêts, Nice-Ouest, 'Autorités militaries italiennes: interdiction d'accès dans la région du Col de Braûs,' 8 May 1943.
[139] ADAM 521 W 6 Bosio, Inspecteur-Adjoint des Eaux et Forêts, Nice-Est, 'Rapport: délits en zone occupé,' 1 December 1941.

trees on this land... animals are likely to kill these trees and their passage compromise the stability of the recently laid down soil, leading to falling rocks.' This threatened to block a major road below. [140]

These concerns need to be seen in the light of foresters' longstanding belief that peasant practices compromised the health and future of mountain forests, yet they demonstrate how the presence of occupation armies added a new twist to these tensions between the state and peasant communities. [141] The case also shows the belief widely held by foresters that an unregulated forest would inevitably degrade.

In the eyes of foresters, occupation soldiers, like peasants, were undisciplined forest users. Military felling dictated by short term concerns conflicted with the long-term-ism of *aménagement*, and the Forestry Administration tried to bring military felling under some kind of control. Yet foresters had limited means at their disposal. One forester recognised that they were unable to prevent troops from taking timber as and when they needed it. Instead, he argued that their role should be to advise and select the trees to be felled; 'this designation by a competent technical service will enable us to avoid wasting forestry resources that is inevitable with all troops untrained on the subject, whatever their nationality.' He recommended that Italian troops should consult French foresters when they wanted wood and, in those zones which were out of bounds for military reasons, the Italian forestry service should regulate

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[140] ADAM 521 W 6 Leroy, Inspecteur-Adjoint des Eaux et Forêts chargé de l'intérim de l'inspection à Nice-Est, 19 June 1943.

[141] See Whited, *Peasant Politics in Modern France*. Geographers in interwar France also accused the peasantry of contributing to deforestation. See, for instance, Arbos, *La vie pastorale dans les Alpes françaises*, 41. Foresters in other European countries also believed that peasant activity led to forest degradation and that only they could ensure the long-term management of this resource. See A. S. Mather and J. Fairburn, 'From Floods to Reforestation: The Forest Transition in Switzerland,' *Environment and History* 6/4 (2000): 399-421; and Gerhard Weiss, 'Mountain Forest Policy in Austria: A Historical Policy Analysis on Regulating a Natural Resource,' *Environment and History* 7/3 (2001): 335-55.

forestry exploitations. [142] It seems that he favoured foreign control over these areas rather than a state of anarchy to emerge in the forest. Similarly, another inspector recognised that the Forestry Administration could not prevent troops from making unexpected cuts, but at the very least foresters should 'ensure that these exploitations were done in the least damaging way to the forest and that the timber taken was inventoried as precisely as possible.' [143]

However, army units could be deliberately obstinate, withholding their identities from foresters who challenged their unauthorised felling, making it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the felling to be regularised and paid for. [144] Moreover, a lone forester was physically no match for an army unit. One Forestry Inspector, obviously shaken after an encounter with a German patrol and its dogs, feared a future 'accident or incident' and refused thereafter to patrol that particular forest. [145] Some of the only options available to foresters were complaining to military commanders and writing reports detailing forest abuses. In the Alpes-Maritimes, foresters filed numerous reports on the Italian soldiers' illegal felling. For instance, a report filed in November 1943 complained that the Italian troops cut wood 'without any control.' [146] This became a recurrent complaint; the Forestry Inspector in Draguignan described such felling as

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[142] ADAM 521 W 6 Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts to Préfet des Alpes-Maritimes, 24 May 1943.
[143] ADAM 521 W 6 Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Nice Ouest, 'Note de service,' 26 January 1943.
[144] See, for example, ADAM 521 W 6 Leroy, Inspecteur-Adjoint des Eaux et Forêts chargé de l'intérim de l'inspection à Nice-Est, 'Rapport,' 24 June 1943; and ADAM 521 W 6 Michel, Garde des Eaux et Forêts, Mougins, 'Procès-verbal de constat no. 6,' 5 August 1944.'
[145] ADHA 1043 W 74 Allouard, Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Briançon, 'Rapport,' 15 October 1943.
[146] ADAM 521 W 6 Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Nice, 'Note de Service: ravitaillement en bois de chauffage et de cuisine des troupes italienne en opérations dans les Alpes-Maritimes', 18 November 1942.

'absolutely arbitrary and irregular.' [147] Although at times troops cut wood 'according to the rules of sylviculture,' it seems that the 'richness and ease of... exploitation' was more likely to dictate where and when timber was extracted from the forest, at least according to the Forestry Inspector at Embrun in the Hautes-Alpes. [148]

Soldiers also proved themselves to be extremely inconsiderate among the trees. On one occasion in the Breil-sur-Roya communal forest, Italian troops were so careless when transporting timber out of the forest that they damaged young plantations on the edge of the forestry road. [149] Such carelessness could have serious repercussions. Not infrequently, blazes broke out during troop manoeuvres and military exercises and at times foresters blamed fires on the 'imprudence of passing Italian troops.' [150]

Perhaps most gallingly, occupation troops undermined foresters' previous reforestation work. Italian troops stationed on Mont Boron in Nice caused damage through unauthorized felling and allowing their mules to roam freely throughout the forest. Foresters were understandably aggrieved by the situation as they had painstakingly replanted Mont Boron from 1860 onwards turning it into 'a fine success story of Aleppo Pine reforestation on very dry terrain.' The Italian troops had therefore destroyed years of investment and hard work.

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[147] ADAM 521 W 6 Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Draguignan, to Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Nice, 7 July 1943.

[148] ADHA 1043 W 74 Arnaud, Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Embrun, 'Rapport: occupation par les Italiens: coupes abusives,' 4 September 1942; and ADHA 1043 W 74 Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Gap to Inspecteur Général des Eaux et Forêts, 9 April 1942.

[149] ADAM 521 W 6 Février, Inspecteur-Adjoint des Eaux et Forêts, Nice, 'Rapport,' 17 March 1943.

[150] For the Alpes-Maritimes see ADAM 521 W 52 'Bulletin de renseignements sur l'incendie constaté le 20 juillet 1943'; ADAM 521 W 52 'Bulletin de renseignements sur l'incendie constaté le 5 janvier 1944'; and ADAM 521 W 57 Commissaire de Police de Vallauris to Préfet des Alpes-Maritimes, Service des Incendies de Forêts, 'Feu de forêt,' 5 June 1943. For the Bouches-du-Rhône see ADBDR 76 W 33 Gendarme nationale, 15e légion, compagnie des Bouches-du-Rhône, No. 1805/2 'Confirmation message téléphoné ce jour 9 juillet 1943 à 19h.' For the Var see ADV 1790 W 130 Millischer, Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Draguignan, 'Rapport trimestriel,' 23 October 1942.

Forestry officials realised that they couldn't question the actual presence of troops on Mont Boron, but they did request that soldiers consult them before modifying the forest in an effort to conciliate 'military aims with the interest of the forest.' [151]

It was not only forestry officials who expressed concern over the soldier's actions. The Institut National d'Action Sanitaire protested demands made by Italian troops for timber from the grounds of its sanatorium at Vallauris, arguing that 'it seems essential that this forest...is saved in its entirety' because of the 'influence it can have on the treatment of the ill.' [152] Local communities were also deeply concerned about occupation armies' forays into the forest. In July 1943, the town council of St-Sauveur in the Alpes-Martimes feared that the Italian army planned to clear-cut forests in the parts of their commune which now lay in Italy. The council argued that the scheme threatened the village's economic future, would lead to landslides, and would destroy the commune's 'forest character' (*ambiance forestière*).' [153] Overall, Italian occupation forces had reportedly damaged 350 hectares of state forests in the region through requisitions and 'abusive felling,' although total damage to the region's forests would have been higher as this figure excludes private forests.[154]

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[151] ADAM 521 W 6 Joesph Ezojani and Roger Millo, 'Procès-verbal de délit, 22 March 1943; and Beaugerie, Garde-Général des Eaux et Forêts, Nice-Ouest, 'Rapport: coupes et dommages causés par les troupes italiennes,' 25 March 1943. The Italians were not the first troops to have threatened this particular forest. A 1904 Eaux et Forêts report criticised the 'damage and abuses' carried out by French soldiers. ADAM 7 M 795 Salvador, Inspecteur-Adjoint des Eaux et Forêts, Nice, 'Rapport: manoeuvres,' 9 November 1907.

[152] In this case, the Italian authorities withdrew the requisition demand stating that they always tried to obtain wood through 'amicable cessions.' ADAM 521 W 6 Gérard Estradier to Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Nice, 27 April 1943; and letter from Lt-Colonel Clementin, Détachment de Liaison près la IVe Armée italienne, 18 May 1943.

[153] ADAM 521 W 6 Maire de St-Saveur, 'Extrait du registre des délibérations du Conseil Municipal de la commune de St-Saveur, séance du 11 juillet 1943: exploitation par l'autorité italienne de la forêt du Bois noir.'

[154] Commission Consultative des Dommages et des Réparations, *Évaluation des Dommages subis par la France du fait de la guerre et de l'occupation ennemi (1939-1945), Part imputable à l'Italie* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1946), 68.

As well as acting as a reservoir of natural resources, the forest was also a strategic site for occupation troops. In terms of forest conservation this could cut both ways. On the one hand, forests provided camouflage and soldiers demanded their conservation, for example along strategic routes. In the forest of Blausac in the Alpes-Maritimes, Italian troops asked for the abandonment of a felling operation due to 'camouflage reasons,' and also demanded the maintenance of tree cover above and below the 'strategic route' of Col de Braüs. [155] But on the other hand, military imperatives sometimes dictated the removal of trees. On at least one occasion Italian troops reportedly felled trees to make 'obstacles intended to prevent enemy planes [from] landing.' [156] More seriously, at Trets in the Bouches-du-Rhône, a forest fire raged across 800 hectares in August 1943. At first, officials thought that Germans forces started the fire to disperse a maquis unit that had assembled in the area. A 1947 report, however, dismissed this theory, suggesting instead that the fire was started to create sightlines for German soldiers surveying strategic routes in the area. The reconstruction cost of this military modification came to twelve million francs. [157]

Occupation troops presented a sustained challenge to the Forestry Administration's control over France's forests. Having already been forced to adapt their principle of *aménagement* to meet spiralling demands for forestry production, foresters saw their sovereignty slip away as occupation armies tightened their grip on French territory and resources. As the Occupation progressed, regulating the forests became more and more of a frantic exercise in

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[155] ADAM 521 W 5 Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts chargé de l'intérim de l'inspection de Nice Ouest to Bensa, 20 April 1943; and Contes, Brigadier des Eaux et Forêts to Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Nice Ouest, 22 April 1943.

[156] ADAM 521 6 Inspecteur-Adjoint des Eaux et Forêts, Nice Ouest, to Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Nice, 6 July 1943.

[157] ADBDR 51 W 25 Service dommages assimilés, dossier CA 42.442 Ag. 'Incendies de forêt du 19 au 23 août 1943,' 2 June 1947.

damage limitation. Huge quantities of wood bypassed the Forestry Administration, ending up on the black market or into the hands of occupation armies. Both Italian and German armies illegally requisitioned wood through their own felling or buying timber directly from French merchants. As one Forestry Conservator admitted in 1941, 'in reality the quantities of wood requisitioned by the Germans are much greater [than state records indicate] because direct buying from private exploiters is frequent.' [158] In May 1942, the Secretary General of the GIF Central Committee wrote to Oberlandforstmeister Haussman, the head of the German Forest Service, to complain that 'a certain number of German organisations have already undertaken forestry exploitations... under irregular conditions [and] without any declaration.' [159] In response to such pressures, the German army issued an Ordonnance on 12 August 1943 in an attempt to regularise the situation, but this appears to have had little effect.[160]

The quantity of wood purloined by the German army was enormous, and their demands for French timber continued even after the D-Day Landings in June 1944. [161] According to the CCDR (whose findings need to be treated with a degree of caution), Germany misappropriated over twenty six million cubic

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[158] CACAN 19771461/41 Deslandres, Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Amiens, to Directeur Général des Forêts, de la Chasse, et de la Pêche, 'État d'avancement de la livraison du chauffage à l'Armée d'occupation,' 25 September 1941.

[159] For instance, in the Seine-Inférieur département the German military cut over 200 hectares of timber. CACAN 19771461/41 Sécretaire Général, Comité central des Groupements Interprofessionels Forestiers to Oberlandforstmeister Haussmann, Chef du Service Forestier Allemand, 'Exploitations forestières par des Services Allemands' 27 May 1942.

[160] For the Ordonnance see CACAN 19771461/41 Comité central des Groupements interprofessionels forestiers to Conservateurs régionaux des Forêts, Contrôleurs généraux de la Production forestière, Présidents des Comités régionaux de Gestion de la Zone Nord, 'Lettre-circulaire, exploitations de bois sur pied et achats de bois abattus effectués par les Unités et Services allemands,' 21 August 1943.

[161] CACAN 19771461/ 41 Pour le Gouverneur Militaire, Le Chef de l'Administration Militaire, Par Ordre, Haussman to Comité central des Groupements interprofessionels forestiers, 'Enquête sur l'acheminement de bois brut pour carburants solides et de bois de feu dans la région parisienne,' 23 July 1944.

metres of construction and industry-grade timber worth over eight billion francs of 1938 value (figures three and four). [162]

Figure 3. German requisitions of wood for construction and industry (raw timber in m^3)

Direct Impositions	1940 (2nd semester)	1941	1942	1943	1944	Total
Imposed on France	1,915,627	3,831,254	3,355,869	4,310,354	3.585,675	16.998.959
Exported to Germany	195,737	379,474	490,480	69,155	292.946	1.427.792
Exported to Eastern *departments*	-	500	65,000	110,000	18.000	193,500
Exported to Belgium	-	11,500	30,000	18,000	15,000	74.500
Total (direct impositions)	*2,111,364*	*4,222,728*	*3,941,349*	*4,507,689*	*3.911.612*	*18.694.751*
Indirect impositions and 'achats libres'	*993,307*	*1,986,615*	*2,170,538*	*1,810,593*	*829,086*	*7,790.139*
Total 'German misappropriations' (*bois détourné*)	**3,104,671**	**6,209,343**	**6,111,887**	**6,318,282**	**4,740,707**	**26,484,890**

Source: *Commission consultative des dommages et des réparations, Dommages subis par la France et l'Union française du fait de la guerre et de l'occupation ennemie (1939-1945)* (Imprimerie nationale, 1951), 10 vols. Vol. 6 Monograph M.P.18 'Prélèvements allemands de matières premières: bois et produits forestiers (Imprimerie nationale, 1947), 24.

Figure 4. German impositions (global figures in thousands of francs, cork excluded)

	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	Totals
Wood for Industry and Construction	1,100,737	2,209,050	2,810,888	3,176,102	3,567,701	12,864,480
Forest fuels	-	-	217,155	976,635	1,661,733	2,855,523
Fire wood	43,908	87,818	99,530	90,481	119,040	440,777
Resinous products	149,180	200,370	313,460	281,540	950	945,500
Total francs, 1947 value	**1,293,825**	**2,497,238**	**3,441,033**	**4,524,758**	**5,349,426**	**17,106,280**
Total francs 1938 value	**904,772**	**1,451,880**	**1,703,481**	**1,925,428**	**2,057,471**	**8,043,032**

Source: *Commission consultative des dommages et des réparations, Dommages subis par la France et l'Union française du fait de la guerre et de l'occupation ennemie (1939-1945)* (Imprimerie nationale, 1951), 10 vols. Vol. 6 Monograph M.P.18 'Prélèvements allemands de matières premières: bois et produits forestiers' (Imprimerie nationale, 1947), 72.

These enormous requisitions deprived French society of badly needed wood, as well as contributing to the overexploitation of France's forests between 1940 and 1944. Moreover, these figures confirm that, as in other areas, Vichy's policy of collaboration with Germany secured few advantages for France, especially as the war progressed.

[162] Commission consultative, *Dommages subis par la France et l'Union française*, Vol 6, 72.

Fighting in the forest

As well as being productive and political spaces, forests became arenas for military combat. Local authorities in Provence had recognised the dangers Allied bombing raids posed to forests and agriculture since at least 1941, identifying a 'grave danger' of combat-related fires, particularly during the summer, and issuing instructions on how to deal with incendiary devices. On a national level, the Vichy government shared these concerns.[163] In 1942, the head of the gendarmerie in the Bouches-du-Rhône even suggested that foreign and anti-government elements were behind the upsurge in forest fires:

> It is inadvisable to reject *a priori* the hypothesis of concerted action, executed to order, with the aim of creating difficulties for the [Vichy] regime. No information supports these presumptions, but can we really believe in the complete passivity of French extremists, Polish or Spanish miners from the Gardonne or Gréasque coalmines, [or] former militants, too compromised to try to obtain an armistice from the government, who are no doubt familiar with the sabotage attempts recently committed in the mine shafts? Aren't forest fires easier to start, and with less risk? [164]

In fact, such logic was counter-intuitive, for once resistance groups began to seek shelter in forests it made no sense for them to deliberately destroy the vegetation that provided their cover. Rather, German forces used fire to flush out the *maquis*. On the Canjuers plateau in the Haut-Var during August 1944, German soldiers

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[163] ADAM 109 W 8 Préfet des Alpes-Maritimes to Sous-Préfect de Grasse and Maires des Alpes-Maritimes, 'Engins incendaires utilisés par certains aéronautiques.' [n.d.]; and ADAM 109 W 8 Ministre Secrétaire d'État à la guerre to Préfets, 'Programme de défense passive.' 17 April 1941.
[164] ADBDR 76 W 33 Grassy, Chef d'Escadron, Commandant la Compagnie de Gendarmerie des Bouches-du-Rhône, 'Rapport sur les nombreux incendies allumés dans les forêts du département depuis le début de juin 1942.' 29 August 1942. Richard Tucker also suggests that refugees and resistance fighters lit forest fires to thwart German operations. See 'World Wars and the Globalization of Timber Cutting,' 122.

armed with shells and flame-throwers, ignited vegetation to drive out resistance units. A *maquisard* bore witness to the ensuring inferno; 'I have never seen such a fire. It was like hell. I'm certain that no insect could have survived on Canjuers. Then it was the turn of assault troops who "cleaned" each camp with flame-throwers. From where we were it was a spectacle that was at once fascinating and tragic. Every one of us imagined how we would have met our end in this deluge of flames.' [165]

As the case of Canjuers illuminates, regular army units had the potential to cause more damage to the forest environment than the resistance. Allied plans to invade the Provencal coast in August 1944 placed forests directly in the line of fire. During the planning stages of the landings, Allied strategists studied the forests that clung to the Mediterranean coast. According to the Inter-Service Topographical Department, forests could provide useful cover, although, in general, they represented an obstacle to rapid troop movement. For instance, progress through the 'well-forested.' Esterel massif would be 'slow and difficult' and at the landing of Port de l'Avis 'cross country movement by infantry would be slow and difficult on account of the broken and hilly country which for the most part is covered with thick pine forest.'[166]

Furthermore, Allied planners took very seriously the threat posed by forest fires. According to Admiral André-Georges Lemonier, former chief of French Naval Forces, plans were afoot to ignite Provence's forests before the

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[165] Quoted in Durandet, *Maquis de Provence*, 215. Vadrot suggests that the German army lit fires to flush out resistance units and destroy their cover in Fontainebleu forest. *Guerres et environnement*, 219.

[166] National Archives, London, WO 252/198 Inter-Service Topographical Department, 'France-Mediterranean Coast: Special Report on Coast, Beaches, and Exits from Toulon to the Franco-Italian Border including abridged descriptions of the small ports of St. Tropez, St. Raphaël, Cannes, Antibes, Villefranche, and Monoco,' 18 March 1943. For the history of the Allied Landings see Arthur Layton Funk, *Hidden Ally: The French Resistance, Special Operations, and the Landings in Southern France, 1944* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992); and Philippe Lamarque, *Débarquement en Provence: 15e août 1944* (Paris: Le Cherche-Midi, 2003).

landings in order to avert the possibility of forest fires that could restrict troop movement. Lemonier was horrified at the very idea, finding it 'hard to subscribe in advance to the systematic destruction of our beautiful Provencal forests.' Luckily for Lemonier (and the forests) Allied command renounced this idea and there was a heavy downpour before the landings, reducing the chance of fire. [167] Writing in 1980, Colonel Alfred Martin-Siegfried, Vice-president of the Union régionale du Sud-Est pour la sauvegarde de la vie, la nature, et de l'environnement (Regional Union of the South East for the Safeguard of Life, Nature, and the Environment), stressed that this near-miss was a timely reminder of 'the value, vulnerability... and fragility [of our forests] and an incitement to redouble our efforts to preserve ... and reconstitute the Var's forests that emerged unscathed from Operation Anvil almost forty years ago.' [168]

But Provence's forests did not emerge unscathed from the landings. Allied aerial and naval bombardments damaged trees and started fires; a postwar forestry report on the Port-Cros island lamented the 'ravages' of war, as bombardments against fortifications had ignited surrounding trees. [169] Allied bombardments of roads in the Var led to forest fires, while the Allied landings reportedly caused fifteen million francs worth of damage to the region's cork trees. [170] German troops also used forest fires as a defensive tactic. In Gémenous in the Bouches-du-Rhône, retreating German soldiers set fire to the communal forest, which was apparently 'one of the most beautiful [forests] in the

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[167] André-Georges Lemonier, *Cap sur la Provence* (Paris: Éditions France-Empire, 1955), 82.
[168] Alfred Martin-Siegfried, 'Le débarquement allié sur les côtes varoises,' *Forêt Méditerranéenne* 2/2 (December 1980), 209-10. See also Alfred Martin-Siegfried, 'Stratégie et environnement: le débarquement allié sur la côte varoise, août 1944: un désastre évité de justesse' *La Cohorte* 75 (July 1982), 21-24.
[169] ADAM 521 W 31 Loudes, 'Rapport sur la forêt de Port Cros,' [n.d.].
[170] ADV 37 J 7/5 'Quelques fait relatifs à la Libération de Signes 19 août 1944, note prises au jour le jour par M. Nauwellaer,' [n.d.]; and Commission consultative, *Dommages subis par la France*, Vol. 6, 53.

département.' [171] Similarly, in the commune of Roquefort-la-Bédoule, German forces lit a fire in order to slow down advancing Allied units. [172] In all. at least 2,769 hectares of Provencal forests were partially or completely damaged during the Allied invasion. [173] Yet there were marked differences across Provence and forest damage was worse in coastal areas. Across the land-locked Vaucluse *département*, only twenty hectares of forests were strewn with bombs, craters, and military installations. [174] In contrast, the Var had 19,7500 hectares of mined and crater-riddled forests. [175]

Elsewhere in France, military combat impacted on the forest. Much of the Allied offensive in Lorraine was fought in the forest, where both Allied and Axis forces used the forest for defensive cover and to assemble troops before launching attacks. [176] In the Vosges, mines covered 29,000 hectares of forest, while 258,000,000 francs worth of damage had reportedly been caused to the Moselle's forests and 50,000,000 to the Bas-Rhin's. [177] The forest's transformation into a site of combat impinged on its productive functions; the CCDR estimated that bombardments, clearcutting, and munitions explosions had destroyed or rendered unusable approximately 3,500,000 steres of firewood. [178]

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[171] ADBDR 51 W 69 Arbuad, Ingénieur-Principal des Eaux et Forêts, 'Rapport: commune de Gemenos- Dommages de Guerre, demande de transfert d'indemnités', 25 April 1957; and Etienne Olivier, 'Procès-verbal de constat de rapport d'expertise,' 4 December 1947.
[172] ADBDR 51 W 73 Rapport d'enquêteur agricole, Dossier CA H1917Z, 5 December 1953.
[173] The figure of 2,769 hectares comes from an analysis of Forestry Administration files in the Archives départementales of the Alpes-Maritimes, Bouches-du-Rhône, and Var.
[174] CHAN F [10] 7103 Ingénieur du Génie Rural, Avignon, to Inspecteur-Général du Génie Rural, 'Estimation provisoire immédiate des dommages agricoles causés par la guerre dans le département,' May 1946.
[175] CHAN F [10] 7103 Ingénieur en chef du Génie rural to Inspecteur-Général du Génie Rural, 'Évaluation provisoire des dommages agricoles causés par la guerre,' 30 March 1946.
[176] O' Sullivan and Miller, *Geography of Warfare*, 76.
[177] CHAN F [10] 7103 Ingénieur en chef du Génie rural to Inspecteur-Général du Génie Rural, 'Reconstitution agricole,' 17 June 1946; Inspecteur-Général du Génie Rural to Secrétaire-Général de la Commission consultative des dommages et réparations, 23 September 1948.
[178] Commission consultative, *Dommages subis par la France*, Vol. 6., 44.

During the combats of 1944 forests became both sites and casualties of military conflict. Fighting in the forest overrode its productive and ideological functions and was wholly incompatible with foresters' *aménagement* principles. This is illustrative of how, throughout the "dark years," different factions within France struggled to maintain control of the forest, but were ultimately thwarted by the dominance of occupation armies.

This intensive human activity left an ecological footprint. After the war, reports suggested that war damage to the forest had been considerable and diverse; foresters recognised this diversity by breaking down war-related damage into three main areas; losses from bombs, fires, and mines; partial or total destruction of forestry buildings; and over-exploitation.[179] After an investigation conducted with Regional Conservators (and reported in the CCDR), the Forest Administration's Direction General estimated that thirty million cubic metres of undressed construction- and industry-grade timber had been damaged by 'acts of war' (such as bombardments, clearcutting, fires, and artillery damage) and that this damage spread across 400,000 hectares (including 250,000 hectares in the Landes forest in South Western France).[180] Collardet concurred, contending that approximately 400,000 hectares of forest had been directly or indirectly damaged through 'bombings, explosions, and combat.' [181] Given that before the war forests in France covered 10,700,000 hectares, the figure of 400,000 hectares represented just under four percent of France's forest. [182] Although this figure

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[179] ADHA 1043 W 74 Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Gap, 'Note: dommages de guerre,' 24 May 1945.

[180] Commission consultative, *Dommages subis par la France*, Vol. 6., 44. For the creation of the Landes forest in the nineteenth century see Bess, *Light-Green Society*, 262-3.

[181] Kernan, 'War's Toll of French Forests,' 442.

[182] France, of course, was not the only European country to have experienced transformation to its forests during the war. Czechoslovakia, Poland, Italy, and the United Kingdom were among those countries to have greatly increased production. This had also been the case in neutral

may seem small, it is important to recognise that it was double the number of hectares of forest damaged in combat during the First World War.[183] Moreover, the figure of 400,000 hectares does not include civilian and military overexploitation of the forest for firewood and other products. The actual figure, therefore, is likely to be much higher.

As this chapter has shown, forests mattered during the war, not least because they provided natural resources which were essential to the continuation of everyday life. But this is only one aspect of this history as forests were simultaneously productive spaces, sites of combat, and places of identity formation. These conflicting uses and visions of the forests challenged each other between 1940 and 1944 and tensions existed between the forest's productivity and its sustainability, foresters' management principles and the immediate needs of occupying forces, as well as between Vichy and the resistance. The forest, therefore, was not the safe, depoliticalised space constructed by Vichy. Yet, the forest was not the only type of habitat that was invested with ideological and productive functions during the war. Vichy simultaneously portrayed the Camargue wetlands as a place of tradition and stability and strove to increase its agricultural productivity. And, just as foresters had attempted to protect forests from the demands of war, so too did nature preservationist groups battle to shield the Camargue from war's pressures.

Switzerland. See CACAN 19880470/176 Minutes of the Commission Européene des Forêts et produits forestiers, Première Session, Geneva, 1-12 July 1948.

[183] Four years of conflict during the First World War destroyed approximately 200,000 hectares of woodland in North Eastern France. See Tamara L. Whited, 'France,' in *Encyclopedia of World Environmental History*, 3 vols., vol. 2 F-N, Shepard Krech III, John R. McNeill, and Carolyn Merchant, eds., (New York: Routledge, 2004), 558-9.

The Camargue between War and Peace

In 1948, Henri Marc, Carle Naudot, and Victor Quenin, three members of the Confrérie des Gardiens de Saint-Georges-en-Arles, published *Terre de Camargue*, a collection of photographs depicting the Camargue landscape, accompanied by texts in both French and Provencal. The photographs, taken during the years of war and Occupation, presented a timeless image of the Camargue landscape, including its extensive coastline, sand dunes, wind-beaten trees, wild horses, majestic bulls, and exotic-looking *gitans* (Roma or gypsies), who had gathered in May 1942 to celebrate their annual pilgrimage to the village of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer. For Marc, Naudot, and Quenin, the Camargue was a 'flat land of infinite horizons, a land of sun and wind with its vast *étangs* (lagoons), its marshes, its gleaming efflorescent salt pans, a land of mirages, of hunting, where the bull is king, a land of love and traditions.' These marshlands were the home of a 'restful wildness (*une reposante sauvagerie*)... and a melancholic charm [which] is perhaps the last refuge of everything that was once Provence.' According to the authors of *Terre de Camargue*, the wetland's solitude was to be celebrated and treasured in a century dominated by

materialism, particularly as the region had held onto its 'mystique and wild (*sauvage*) character.' [1]

Terre de Camargue presented the region as an oasis of tradition, solitude, and wildness, a landscape oblivious to the mechanised, global warfare raging around it. No signs of human conflict are visible in the book's photographs. War is absent from these serene images. But war and occupation did not leave the Camargue untroubled, although this episode has not been studied in detail. [2] This is an oversight as the "dark years" represented something of a "crisis point" for the Camargue.

Although the wetlands were, by 1939, the result of centuries of human modification, traditionalist writers and nature preservationists constructed them as a wild, virginal landscape worthy of protection for its Provencal traditions, aesthetic beauty, and scientific significance (the area was, and still is, particularly famed for its varied bird life, including flamingos). For the Camargue's defenders, war and occupation threatened to irreversibly transform the region's character; the Vichy regime sought to domesticate the area through modernising its agriculture, and French, German, and Allied forces identified the Camargue's apparently empty expanses as suitable for aerial training grounds. This military mobilisation of the marshlands culminated in the German army's plans to flood the Camargue to prevent Allied planes landing in the event of an invasion. Ultimately, the efforts of the Société nationale d'acclimatation de France (SNAF), which ran a nature reserve centred on the Vaccarès *étang*, and nature's own (unintentional) resilience, combined to ensure that the Camargue emerged from

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[1] Henri Marc, Carle Naudot, and Victor Quenin, *Terre de Camargue* (Grenoble: Arthaud, 1948), 12, 110-13.

[2] For instance, the period from 1940 to 1944 is not given extensive consideration in Bernard Picon's *L'espace et le temps en Camargue* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1988).

the war relatively unscathed. The SNAF's wartime activity highlights that nature mattered to some (admittedly small) sections within society, and that this concern motivated them to expend considerable energy on preserving landscapes at a time of hardship and upheaval.

While the Camargue's wartime environmental history is interesting in its own right, it also exposes wider historical processes. For a start, it highlights the contradictions of the Vichy regime, which simultaneously sought to modernise the Camargue and preserve its traditions. For although its war against "wasteland" (see chapter two) prescribed conversion of the Camargue's uncultivated land into productive farmland, Vichy incorporated the wetlands in its "back to the land" rhetoric and classified the area as a 'natural monument.' In addition, the regime built an internment camp at Saliers modelled on a supposedly traditional Camargue-style village in order to "stabilise" (*sédentariser*) France's Roma population. The fact that Vichy valued the Camargue's supposed wildness suggests that "back to the land" rhetoric did not centre solely on "domesticated" nature, such as farmland.

Moreover, the Camargue's wartime history addresses questions of nature's "agency" and the difficulties that humans sometimes face when incorporating the natural world into their political and military strategies. The Camargue's climate directly contributed to the failure of Vichy's aims for the Saliers camp and helped undermine German submersion plans. While I do not suggest that nature purposely set out to thwart human actors, this unpredictability suggests that the natural environment was not a static, neutral backdrop during the war but an entity that human actors tried to mobilise with often uncertain results.

Chapter Four

This chapter begins by tracing the Camargue's pre-war creation, before examining Vichy's contradictory policies towards it (including the establishment of Saliers camp), which leads onto an analysis of the SNAF's campaign to protect the wetlands. I end with the role nature played (alongside material shortages) in thwarting German submersion plans.

The Camargue before 1940

The Camargue was fashioned through a combination of natural and human factors. The wetlands stretch over 145,000 hectares and form an approximate triangle with the Mediterranean as the base and the Grand and Petit Rhône rivers as the two sides, reaching a point at Arles in the north. During the Flandrain period of the Upper Pleistocene, the Rhône created the Camargue by depositing alluvial silt and sands. As a consequence, the area is extremely flat, dropping only a few centimetres per kilometre from Arles to the coast (the highest points are its sand dunes at approximately four metres above sea level). The Camargue possesses a Mediterranean climate, namely hot, arid summers and cool, wet winters, with variable rainfall. The combination of high temperatures and strong winds, such as the *mistral*, results in a deficit of water; on average 500mm of rain fall each year while 1,500mm of water evaporates. As a consequence, salt aquifers rise to the surface, privileging *sansouire* vegetal associations that can withstand the high salt content. [3]

[3] This description is based on Patrick Duncan, *Horses and Grasses: The Nutritional Ecology of Equids and their Impact on the Camargue* (New York and London: Springer, 1992), 23-5; Luc Hoffmann, 'An Ecological Sketch of the Camargue,' *British Birds*, 51/9 (September 1958), 321-2; and Picon, *Espace et le temps en Camargue*, 27-34. Hoffmann describes *sansouire* as 'a plain partly subject to seasonal flooding and covered with glasswort (*Athrocnemum* and *Salicornia*). A

Chapter Four

Human activity has strongly shaped the physical development of the Camargue. Bernard Picon outlines how, in the pre-Roman era, the Camargue, then covered by forest, provided hunting and fishing opportunities, as well as timber for the seafaring Phoenicians. From Caesar's establishment of Arles in 46 B.C.E., various waves of agricultural settlers subsequently pioneered the Camargue's cultivation, leading, by the Middle Ages, to deforestation, drainage projects, and the implementation of irrigation and flood defence systems. [4] War also moulded the Camargue landscape as the formerly thick forests of oaks, elms, and pines supplied wood for naval ships. [5]

The inhospitable climate and soil meant that the Camargue proved hard to "tame" and remained sparsely populated. From at least the thirteenth century onwards, secular and religious landowners had sought to drain and cultivate the marshes and, from the sixteenth century, *mas* (or farmhouses) began to appear in the landscape. However, it was the large-scale drainage works of the nineteenth century that transformed the Camargue most profoundly and enabled its more extensive cultivation. [6]

These drainage projects were part of a nationwide scheme to reclaim coastal marshlands which was initiated by Napoleon I. In 1855 and 1870 Ponts et Chaussées, the government hydraulic service, reconstructed dikes along the Rhône and built a sea wall to protect the Camargue from river flooding and high sea levels, whilst digging drainage ditches down to the coast to drain marshland. In all, 30,000 hectares were reclaimed in the nineteenth century, restricting salt-steppes and lagoons to the low-lying southern part of the Camargue around the

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system of brackish pools, temporary or permanent, mostly inter-communicating, intersects this plain' (323).

[4] Picon, *Espace et le temps en Camargue*, 35-42.

[5] Fernand Benoît, *La Camargue* (Paris: Henri Laurens, 1933), 10.

[6] See Picon, *Espace et le temps en Camargue*, 43-53.

Vaccarès *étang*. [7] The result of these human modifications is that the Camargue's contact with the Rhône and the Mediterranean is now controlled by a system of pumps, meaning that the environment has become 'completely artificialised.' [8] As a consequence, an intricate system of dyke, drains, and pumps now maintains the "natural" habitat of the Camargue. By the twentieth century, the Camargue's environment was conducive to the development of salt extraction industries and cattle breeding, which, unlike agriculture, were economically viable on the *sansouire*. [9]

Despite these human modifications, the Camargue's landscape appeared wild and hostile. Writing in 1933, Fernand Benoît, an eminent archaeologist of the Provence region, portrayed the Camargue as 'a landscape of infinite desolation.' Its 'atmosphere [was] saturated with humidity,' and its heat, salt lagoons, and *étangs* reflected 'infinitely' against 'the low coastal skies.' In addition, mirages contributed to the region's 'unreal and tragic character.' [10] Benoît's analysis of the Camargue was a distinctive one, for although he recognized the Vaccarès' claim to be 'one of the richest and most unique natural sites in the world,' his attitude towards the Camargue was dismissive. Like others, he lamented the modernization of the Camargue, yet located its decline further back in the past with the construction of flood defences that turned a well-forested and irrigated region into a state of 'quasi-desert' and prevented the arrival of new alluvial deposits. Consequently, the Camargue was a 'land that is

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[7] Hoffmann, 'Ecological Sketch of the Camargue,' 322; and Hugh D. Clout,' Reclamation of Coastal Marshland,' in Hugh Clout (ed.), *Themes in the Historical Geography of France* (London: Academic Press, 1977), 204-08. A similar process of marsh reclamation emerged in Prussia, led by Frederick the Great. David Blackbourn, '"Conquests from Barbarism": Taming Nature in Frederick the Great's Prussia,' in Mauch, *Nature in German History*, 10-30.

[8] Thierry Lecomte, Christine Le Neveu, Bernard Picon, Jacques Lecomte, 'Au sujet du marais...' in Codoret, *Protection de la nature*, 52.

[9] Robert Zaretsky, *Cock and Bull Stories: Folco de Baroncelli and the Invention of the Camargue* (Lincoln NB. and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 129.

[10] Benoît, *Camargue*, 5.

dying' (*une terre qui meurt*). Furthermore, the inhabitants of this 'swampy' land were subjected to a barrage of 'wind, encroachments from the sea, fevers, and mosquitoes.' [11] Benoît's vision of the Camargue corresponds to deep-seated "expert" attitudes towards marshes within European culture, which, David Blackbourn argues, treated wetlands 'as dark, disorderly corners of nature, where vegetation and animal bodies decayed, emitting noxious-smelling and unhealthy miasmas.' [12]

However, in contrast to Benoît, other observers in interwar France celebrated the Camargue's contemporary landscape. Paradoxically, they held up a landscape which had been thoroughly modernised and "improved" as a place of wildness and tradition. As Picon argues, although it was thoroughly 'dyked, drained, and irrigated... it became one of the main national and international symbols of nature unsullied (*vierge*) by any [human] aggression.' [13] Despite its long history of human modification, the Camargue was portrayed as untamed and otherworldly, especially the Basse-Camargue, the lower reaches of the wetlands. In 1933, writer Susanne Day described the area as:

> A land of immense shallow lagoons that gleam and glitter in the sun, of extensive vineyards, of fever-breeding marshes, and of salt-encrusted wastes. A land of lonely pasturages where graze millions of sheep, of sparse woods whose trees lean over, wearied by the wind, and of mirages that cozen the senses and whose strange fantastic beauty transports you to a world of Fey. [14]

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[11] Ibid. 9-10, 16-7.
[12] Blackbourn, "'Conquests from Barbarism,"' 14.
[13] Picon, *Espace et le temps en Camargue*, 17.
[14] Day, *Where the Mistral Blows*, 180.

Although she wrote of the Camargue's vineyards and pastures, the effect for Day was overwhelmingly one of a wild, exotic landscape. Among the lagoons and expanses of sand, Day felt that she had left cultivated Europe behind; 'France vanishes and you find yourself in an outpost of Africa.' [15]

French writers viewed the Camargue in a similar way. Robert Zaretsky argues that the Félibrige movement (a grouping of poets inspired by Frédéric Mistral which strove to preserve Occitan language and culture) used the Camargue as a 'screen' for their traditionalist musings and construction of regionalist identities. In Zaretsky's analysis, Félibrige writers and Folco de Baroncelli, a self-styled aristocratic defender of the Camargue and bull-breeder, considered the wetlands as the 'last, unsullied source of a wild and primitive Provence.' [16] Its mystery, harshness, and wildness, Zaretsky continues, were celebrated as guarantors of 'Occitan nationalism and nostalgia.' Although the Camargue was portrayed as a place of fear and confusion, this was treated as a positive characteristic and worthy of defending. As Zaretsky argues, 'rather than walls to protect humankind from the forces of chaos, it is as if the writers of the Camargue require these walls to protect the sources of chaos from an outside world that threatens uniformity and homogeneity.' [17]

Others felt an urge to protect the Camargue's strange beauty and charm from modernity's supposedly harmful influence. On the eve of the Second World War, Tony Burnand, a writer specialising in fishing and hunting, and Joseph Oberthür, a naturalist, writer, and artist, published *Toute la Camargue* (1938), an introduction to the Camargue's landscape and a passionate plea for its preservation. Across two volumes, Burnand and Oberthür depicted a wild and at

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[15] Ibid. 185.
[16] Zaretsky, *Cock and Bull Stories*, 9, 54.
[17] Ibid. 126.

times harsh landscape. The Camargue was a salty, 'watery desert' (*désert d'eau*) where 'the mosquitoes and bulls are particularly aggressive' and its 'charm... slightly melancholic.' [18] Nonetheless, the Camargue held a certain beauty for those who took the time to look:

> Sad, the Camargue? No! Resigned, but vibrant; languid, but soft and tender, all in nuances, in old-fashioned graces that brusquely rub shoulders with ultramodern audacities of mood (*ton*), sound, and harmony. Mysterious? Not even, [instead] ready to give herself to those who know how to understand her and put her at ease. [The Camargue is] like those women that no-one regards [and] which new-comers don't bother with, but who reveal, to those who notice and seek them out, their radiant grace, their sparkling but discreet imagination, [and] their delicate culture.[19]

The comparison between the Camargue and a superficially "plain" but ultimately radiant woman, implied that those who are blinded by the superficiality and speed of modernity were incapable of appreciating the wholesome and authentic things in life. In addition, the feminised Camargue required the protection of men determined to uncover her hidden charms and shelter her from others. As a consequence, although they recognised that human factors, such as deforestation, industry, and war, had created the apparently wild Camargue, Burnand and Oberthür demanded that the area be protected against the ravages of the form of modernity that had developed under liberal democracy.

For Burnand and Oberthür, so-called progress, such as agricultural intensification and plans to increase wine production, posed a serious threat to the Camargue. They interpreted modernity as a pollutant, bent on corrupting the

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[18] Tony Burnand and Joseph Oberthür, *Toute la Camargue: volume I* (Paris: Éditions de la Bonne Idée, 1938), 3, 7.
[19] Ibid. 75.

Camargue's purity. Yet while the physical manifestations of modern life, such as telegraph poles, advertisement boards, electricity, petrol stations, and 'comfort' could be removed, Burnand and Oberthür held a greater fear of changing mentalities and the speeding up of life which would sweep away the old traditions, replacing them with the political and social 'virus' of modernity. Burnand and Oberthür hoped that one day the Camargue would be freed from the stranglehold of modern society, after which it would be necessary to clean 'the waste that had accumulated for some years, and simply forbid any new refuse being disposed on the Camargue.' Under their plan for the Camargue's future, new houses would only be tolerated if built in the "Camargue style;" there would no place for industrial installations, electricity pylons, or new roads. Once cleaned and protected, they envisaged that poets and naturalists would flock to the Camargue, while visitors would pay for the privilege of visiting this 'ethnological, botanical, and zoological reserve.' [20]

Such arguments need to be seen within the context of a wider critique of industrial modernity in interwar France. As Romy Golan argues, these attitudes encompassed 'disenchantment with technology,' alienation from modern industrial practices inspired by Taylorism, anti-urbanism, and *passéisme* (an entrenched resistance to change and a deep nostalgia for the past). The return to a rural, traditional France was prescribed as the alternative. [21] However, whereas "back to the land-ism" is normally associated in France with the peasantry and agriculture (in other words domesticated nature), the example of the Camargue suggests that this is not always the case. Indeed, it was here that "wild" nature was presented as an alternative to modernity. Furthermore, the opposition

[20] Tony Burnand and Joseph Oberthür, *Toute la Camargue: volume 2* (Paris: Éditions de la Bonne Idée, 1939), 200, 204-5.
[21] Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia*, ix, xi.

between tradition and modernity in France is not as clear cut as is commonly believed. As Zaretsky argues, traditionalists in the Camargue adopted and manipulated modern practices when they called on the state to protect the Camargue from the harmful effects of modernity. [22] The modern state was paradoxically solicited to protect tradition from the influence of modern society.

Burnand and Oberthür called for an 'opposing influence' to be used to challenge industrial modernity and for someone to 'fight, put up the barriers, desperately maintain all that which makes up the Camargue's beauty, its moral dignity, its physical splendour.' Consequently, they praised the SNAF for striving to preserve the Camargue's diverse fauna and flora. [23] Since April 1927, the SNAF had managed a nature reserve covering approximately 12,000 hectares centred on the Vaccarès *étang*, after coming to an agreement with the Alais, Froges, and Camargue company which owned approximately 27,000 hectares of the Basse-Camargue for salt extraction (salt ceased to be extracted on the territory ceded to the SNAF).

The SNAF, which was established in 1854 by Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, a Professor of Mammals and Birds at the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris, had strong links with French colonialism. It was originally concerned with a practice known as acclimatisation - the introduction and adaptation of non-native species into different environments (such as undertaking the speculative venture of introducing kangaroos into the French Pyrenees). [24] It would be wrong, therefore, to confuse the SNAF's aims with those of modern

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[22] See Zaretsky, *Cock and Bull Stories*, 116-19.
[23] Burnand and Oberthür, *Toute la Camargue: 2*, 185-9. Hoffmann provides an extensive overview of the Camargue's wildlife in 'An Ecological Sketch of the Camargue,' 324-47.
[24] Bess, *Light-Green Society*, 64-6. For a detailed history of the SNAF, see Michael A. Osborne, *Nature, the Exotic, and the Science of French Colonialism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994).

environmentalism. As Michael Bess argues, 'underlying Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire's efforts lay an unabashedly homocentric vision of the human place within nature – a vision in which a scientist's highest calling was to understand nature's inner workings, the better to harness its bounty toward human ends.' [25]

However, by the twentieth century, the SNAF had come round to a vision of nature protection that was more concerned with aesthetic beauty and protecting species. As a consequence, it became involved in the establishment of '*réserves naturelles*' and national parks in both metropolitan France and its colonies. [26] Not that this meant that the SNAF had abandoned the scientific study of the natural world. According to Gabriel Tallon, a former chemical engineer who became director of the Camargue reserve in 1929 and stayed there for almost 40 years, the SNAF had two main aims in the Camargue; the protection of nature and the promotion of scientific study. [27]

As one of a handful of *réserves naturelles* in France, the *Réserve zoologique et botanique de Camargue's* early years were fraught with difficulties, as hunters and fishermen contested its boundaries in the courts.[28] A visitor to the reserve also highlighted how the local population had designs on its feathered inhabitants and reportedly 'killed adult birds, collected eggs to make omelettes, and even [took] chicks to put in the *fricassée*.' [29]

The precarious existence of the reserve was exacerbated by the SNAF's limited resources, it being a relatively small organisation (it could claim only

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[25] Bess, *Light-Green Society*, 65.
[26] Ibid., 69; and Ford, 'Nature, Culture, and Conservation,' 191-3.
[27] Gabriel Tallon, *La Réserve zoologique et botanique de Camargue* (Paris: Publications de la Société nationale d'acclimatation de France, [n.d.]), 16.
[28] Caffarelli, 'Histoire de la réserve de Camargue,' 58.
[29] Docteur A. Rochon-Duvigneuad, 'Une visite à la Réserve de Camargue: l'effort à faire pour son organisation,' *Bulletin de la Société nationale d'acclimatation de France*, 75th year, no. 8 (August 1928), 113-5.

2,500 members at the start of the twentieth century). As well as managing the Camargue reserve, the organisation had also established ones at Néouvielle in 1935 and Lauzanier in 1936 (the former was in the Pyrenees, the latter in the Alps), and published the journal *La Terre et la Vie*, which sought to promote understanding of nature protection, ethnology, and natural sciences to an educated readership. [30]

Yet despite its small size, the SNAF had high hopes for the Camargue reserve. Tallon believed that under the SNAF's careful management, the reserve would become 'an oasis where birds can frolic in peace, nest in increasing numbers, [and] where migratory birds can rest in total harmony.' The reserve would also serve, Tallon believed, as a 'centre of radiance (*rayonnement*) for the philosophy of nature protection.' [31] The reserve did indeed secure some international recognition. Judith Ferrier, President of The Norfolk and Norwich Naturalist Society, praised the reserve's achievements. [32]

Somewhat ironically, given the extent to which humans had modified the Camargue and that the reserve's very existence depended on the maintenance of the system of dykes, drains, and pumps, Clément Bressou, the SNAF's Secretary General and director of its reserves, asserted that by banning hunting, the collection of bird eggs, tree felling, and agriculture on the reserve, nature could

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[30] J.-P. Raffin and G. Ricou, 'Le lien entre les scientifiques et les associations de protection de la nature: approche historique,' in Codoret (ed.), *Protection de la nature*, 64-5. Compared to the number and size of national parks in the USA (the first having been established at Yellowstone in 1872), France had a relatively limited area put aside as nature reserves. In 1861, emperor Louis Napoleon had protected 1,097 hectares of Fontainebleu forest as a *réserve artistique*, while the Réserve Naturelle des Sept-Îles was created in 1912 on a group of rocks off the Brittany coast. In 1914, a 5,000 hectare reserve was set up around Mont Pelvoux in the Alpes. See Bess, *Light-Green Society*, 67-8; and Ford, 'Nature, Culture, and Conservation,' 183. For a general introduction to the idea of national (and other) parks, see Karen R. Jones and John Wills, *The Invention of the Park: Recreational Landscapes from the Garden of Eden to Disney's Magic Kingdom* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005).

[31] Tallon, *Réserve zoologique et botanique de Camargue*, 21.

[32] Judith M. Ferrier, 'President's Address: The Camargue Reserve in Southern France,' reprinted from the *Transactions of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalist Society*, 14.4 (1938), 320-7. Day also toured the Reserve. See *Where the Mistral Blows*, 185-9.

'be given back to herself, free to develop following her own evolutionary tendencies, free from the actions of man [sic].' [33] The reserve was something of a flagship project for the SNAF. According to Dr. Rochen-Duvigneuad, it covered a 'unique region' and would be the 'future glory' of the SNAF if the organisation managed to ensure its 'efficient surveillance.' Fortunately, the emptiness of the site (*'le terrain à surveiller est complètement désert'*) gave him hope that it would be easy to return it to its 'wild state.' [34]

The reserve's creation and mission was couched in terms of nature preservation, which included the sense that nature within its boundaries needed protection from the harmful consequences of modernity. Like other European nature preservation movements, the creation of the reserve in the Camargue was informed, to an extent, by anti-urbanism and unease at the advance of modernity. Tallon highlighted how the 'Camargue is extremely menaced by the degradations or simply the progress of civilisation.' [35] Bressou wrote of the 'hold (*emprises*) of modern civilisation' over the Camargue and lamented the agriculture and factories that had already 'invaded' the northern part of the Camargue. [36] The scale of this threat rose in the early 1930s, when the SNAF was forced to battle against proposals to drain the Vaccarès in order to plant vineyards. Day noted how the 'speculator has of late been turning an acquisitive eye' on the reserve

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[33] Clément Bressou, 'Preface,' in Burnand and Oberthür, *Toute la Camargue: 1*, ix.
[34] Rochon-Duvigneuad, 'Visite à la Réserve de Camargue,' 113-15.
[35] Tallon, *Réserve zoologique et botanique de Camargue*, 21. There are parallels here with what Paul Sutter observes in the creation of the Wilderness Society in the US, as it reacted to the spread of the motor car in the interwar period. This movement, Sutter argues, was 'shaped more by a collective uneasiness with the enormity of change at a given historical moment than it was by the emergence of a new scientific way of looking at nature.' *Driven Wild: How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2002), 14. Stephen Fox also outlines how American conservationists were motivated by a sense of America becoming engulfed by paving slabs and cities. *The American Conservation Movement: John Muir and his Legacy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), 159-61.
[36] Bressou, 'Preface,' vi.

and gave her full support to the SNAF's attempts to resist these advances; 'it certainly deserves to win, for if its mandate were withdrawn I am afraid there would be a massacre of innocents on the Camargue.' [37]

Before the outbreak of war in 1939, it seemed like the reserve was doing a good job of preserving the Camargue's natural heritage. In the words of Burnand and Oberthür, the water and skies of the Vaccarès now 'spoke of rediscovered peace, the state of nature finally recovered.' According to them, the reserve was fighting to keep this 'almost virgin area' free from the 'false light of progress.' [38] Before 1940, therefore, the Camargue was constructed as a pure and wild place of tradition, natural beauty, and scientific importance, which was worthy of protection. War, defeat, and occupation threatened to undermine these qualities and values.

Vichy in the Camargue

The Camargue posed something of a conundrum for Vichy as the regime was torn between its traditionalist urges and the need to maximise agricultural production. On the one hand, the Camargue acted as a symbol for tradition and rural France which dovetailed with Vichy's "*retour à la terre*" philosophy. On the other hand, Vichy's penchant for cultivated land threatened to destroy the Camargue's celebrated landscapes and traditions. In 1942, Marceau Jouve of the Union régionale corporative agricole des Bouches-du-Rhône presented the dual possibilities of the Camargue to Caziot. The Camargue, according to Jouve, was:

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[37] Day, *Where the Mistral Blows*, 189.
[38] Burnand and Oberthür, *Toute la Camargue*: 2, 196, 199-200.

[A] nostalgic land which has greatly inspired poets, an Eden for wildlife hunters, [and a place] where flamingos and wild ducks hover throughout the year... where the sea lavender's violet flowers mix with the pink ones of the tamarinds, where mosquitoes swarm over the vast marshes from which emerge, every now and then, the horns of a wild bull of which the black or tawny coats often mixes with the speckled white coats of the *camarguais* horses....

But this Rhône delta is also... a rich alluvial land where winemakers abound... and where an army of grape pickers is currently working to prepare the next vintage.

A fertile land, where the cereals grow vigorously. It's also the only place in France where rice cultivation is possible, [which] permits both the production of important harvests and the desalination of land so that other crops can then grow there.

The Camargue offers further possibilities of all these types and we could, after draining (*assainissant*) the marshes, recuperate thousands of hectares of wheat.

In our *département*, [the Camargue] is the most specialised region for wine cultivation, but it remains a land of future [exploitation] in many domains. [39]

The Camargue offered both wildlife and wildness and wine and wheat. And, as Jouve's final comment suggests, the Camargue's full agricultural capabilities were yet to be realised.

The pressures of wartime intensified earlier debates on agricultural expansion and modernisation in the Camargue, especially after Vichy developed plans to exploit the wetlands. Such plans caused concern among those who wished to keep the Camargue in its current physical state. Writing in 1942, Frédéric Gaymard identified the grim consequences of the proposals to intensify agriculture. If the government gave the go-ahead for boosting agricultural production and draining the marshes, the Camargue risked losing its 'current

[39] Marceau Jouve, *Rapport sur l'agriculture dans les Bouches-du-Rhône* (Marseille: Imprimerie Ant. GED, 1942), 4-5.

physiognomy' leaving only 'an immense cultivated plain like all the other plains; the *camarguais* bulls and horses will be progressively pushed back until they finally disappear.' Gaymard's stance, however, was somewhat ambiguous, as he acknowledged that it was necessary to 'yield to the demands of the painful period in which we live' and he wished Vichy success with its agricultural plans; 'we, the friends of the Camargue bend towards the inevitable, but we'll guard a vivid memory of this strange land, one of the jewels of our beautiful Provence.' He hoped, however, that some parts of the Camargue could keep their individuality so that certain regional traditions would be protected. [40]

Vichy's proposals attracted wider attention. The title of a 1941 article by Jean Bazal in the *L'Illustration* put the matter starkly, asking 'Are we going to drain the Camargue?' The Government, the article revealed, planned to lower the water level in the Vaccarès to encourage drainage from higher fields, while fifteen pumping stations were to drain water from lower lying fields. [41]

Although these plans threatened to transform the Camargue landscape and destroy the existence of the reserve, they were not without their supporters. A later article in the same publication described Vichy's scheme in glowing terms. Journalist Paul-Émile Cadilhac argued that the Camargue was 'not just the land of bulls, a theme for literature, an emotionally moving landscape, or a godsend for hunters,' as it also possessed a long history of agricultural exploitation which, thanks to the war, was being revived and extended. Rice crops, which had been cultivated long ago in the Camargue, made a return because imports from Indochina were impossible. Moreover, these new rice crops were being grown mechanically and efficiently. Cadilhac praised the

[40] Gaymard, *Camargue*, 24-5, 52.
[41] Jean Bazal, 'Un plan de grands travaux: va-t-on assécher la Camargue?' *L'Illustration*, 1 February 1941, 105-7.

government's renovation of the Camargue's irrigation systems (which necessitated the shifting of over 50,000 cubic metres of earth) and the electrification of its pumping stations. This *mise en valeur*, however, was conducted rationally, according to Cadilhac; the most unsuitable land was to be left for salt extraction, tourism, and zoological reserves as these activities also attracted revenue. [42] Cadilhac integrated these current developments into the history of the Camargue, presenting an alternative narrative of the Camargue's history which stressed its successful domestication rather than its wildness.

Vichy's agricultural schemes had some success. In 1942. 350 hectares of rice fields were planted, with an extra 1,000 added in 1943. The harvest for 1942 came to 1,000 tonnes, which rose dramatically in the immediate postwar era (30,000 tonnes in 1949).[43] Yet some were unimpressed with these projects. The contrast between the photographs accompanying Cadilhac's and Bazel's articles highlights this split. The images in the former are mainly ones of irrigation canals and mechanised farming equipment. A map accompanying this article also highlighted the multiple ways in which the nature of the Camargue could be tamed and domesticated through agriculture. In the latter, the pictures are of wildlife, romantic looking *étangs*, and 'Le Marquis de Baroncelli, vigilant guardian of *camarguaises* traditions.' Although Bazal claimed to display 'complete objectivity' when examining the question of the Camargue's

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[42] Paul-Émile Cadilhac, 'A la conquête de la terre: l'avenir de la Camargue.' *L'Illustration*, 6 March 1943, 141-43.

[43] René Bomio, 'Le riz en Camargue,' *Science et Vie* 383 (August 1949), 102; and Cadilhac, 'A la conquête de la terre,' 143. Rice now occupies 12,000 hectares in the Camargue, and, ironically, is considered an essential actor in the maintenance of the Camargue's ecosystem as water pumped from the Rhône for rice production irrigates surrounding land. See 'Natura 2000 en Camargue: une place privilégiée pour la riziculture et l'élevage extensif!.' *Bulletin d'information du Parc naturel régional de Camargue*, No. 35, November 2005.

aménagement, it was clear where his loyalties lay. [44] His article pointed out several problems that the project posed. Only grass and wine would be able to grow on the recovered land, and France already produced enough wine. Furthermore, the potential transformation of the Vaccarès would disrupt valuable fish stocks and encourage the already large numbers of mosquitoes, turning the region into a 'centre of paludism.' Bazal also gave an extended interview to Bressou, who posed the question; 'what would Marshal Pétain think about this quarrel between the traditionalists (*anciens*) and the moderns?' Bressou, like Bazal, argued that there was already an overproduction of wine in France and any produced in the Camargue would be of 'poor quality'; '*voilà* all that the devastation of our Basse-Camargue, a pure, regional treasure, would bring.'[45]

Other admirers of the Camargue's landscape also expressed their concern at possible changes to the wetlands' natural environment. Baroncelli, for instance, protested government plans for a hydraulic project near Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer. Writing personally to Pétain, he opposed the project as the Camargue was 'an island of beauty, light, poetry, and mirages in the midst of the hideous materialism that has been the principal cause of our great calamity.' [46]

The opposition to modernisation of the Camargue assumed national proportions. Supporters of the Camargue's traditions and existing landscape mobilised themselves in the capital, forming Les Amis de la Camargue à Paris under the leadership of Dr. Joseph Brel. According to Brel, the group's 'sole ambition' was to support the 'magnificent efforts' of Bressou in his defence of the Camargue. He also offered comfort to the birds and other animals of the

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[44] In a 1941 article, Bazal had already praised the Reserve, arguing that it should be 'officially aided and encouraged' to protect migrating birds. See 'Défense et illustration de la Camargue,' *Visages du Monde*, October 1941, 19.
[45] Jean Bazal, 'Un plan de grands travaux,' 105-7.
[46] Quoted in Zaretsky, *Cock and Bull Stories*, 134.

Camargue, addressing them directly; 'thin-legged flamingos, scarlet corselets, beavers and you, avocets, black bulls and white horses, creatures persecuted by the cruelty of men [sic], we set off with courage in the defence of your land, priceless jewel of the Mediterranean!'[47]

The SNAF also mounted a campaign to minimise the effects of the modernisation of the Camargue, lobbying Charles Colomb, Director General of the Forestry Administration, and Monsieur de Pampelonne, Director General of Génie Rural. The campaign appears to have been largely successful. Following a report from Pierre Salvat, Inspector General of the Forestry Administration, in January 1942, Caziot urged that 'the work of the natural reserve of the Camargue... be maintained and developed.' Caziot's verbal support for the reserve did not stop there, as he declared that its protection 'constitutes a national necessity so nothing must be done in the Camargue that would destroy or diminish [it].' [48]

It is not surprising that traditional elements of the Vichy regime, such as Caziot, came out in support of the Camargue, given that it had become a symbol of regional traditions. As Zaretsky highlights, there was a 'dovetailing of ideological concerns' between Vichy and the defenders of the Camargue. [49] It is here that the contradictions of the Vichy regime are laid bare. At the same time that it planned the agricultural modernisation of the Camargue, the regime classified the natural reserve among the 'sites and natural monuments of artistic,

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[47] Quoted in Bazel, 'Un plan de grands travaux,' 108.
[48] Clément Bressou, 'Actes des Réserves de la Société nationale d'acclimatation de France: Commission générale des réserves,' in *Conférences de la Société nationale d'acclimatation de France: Actes de réserves de la Société nationale d'acclimatation de France pour 1940 et 1941*, included in *Société nationale d'acclimatation de France, Conférences*, Summer and Autumn 1941, Winter 1942, 40.
[49] Zaretsky, *Cock and Bull Stories*, 135. Folklore groups in Arles also thrived in the atmosphere created by Vichy's "National Revolution." Faure, *Le projet culturel de Vichy*, 77-82.

historic, scientific, legendary, or picturesque character' (*arrêté* of 8 June 1942). [50] This classification of the Basse-Camargue was the culmination of over a decade of campaigning on the part of the SNAF, and built on previous legislation concerning the protection of historical and natural monuments, in particular the laws of 31 December 1913 and 2 March 1930. [51] In October 1943, Abel Bonnard, Secretary of State for National Education, wrote to Bressou thanking him for his help in protecting this site 'of an exceptional character and beauty [and] of unprecedented scientific interest,' which suggests that there was a degree of cooperation and respect between Vichy and the SNAF when it suited both their interests. [52] Zaretsky suggests that conferring this extra protection on the reserve was a way for Vichy to 'pay a small price for its lip service to regionalism.' [53] While there is undoubtedly some truth in this observation, it appears that there were deeper motives behind the classification, which tied in with Vichy's attempts to restore France's traditions, and as a consequence, its true character and greatness.

The Basse-Camargue's classification was part of a wider legislative programme of heritage conservation undertaken by Vichy. Laws in 1943 prescribed inventories of heritage sites and limited the installation of advertising boards around protected sites. For the first time in French law, the government introduced the notion of a *champ de vision* around monuments in which

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[50] SNPN Paris, Secretary of State for National Education and Youth, 'Arrêté du 8 June 1942.'
[51] For an overview of heritage laws in France, see Jérôme Fromageau, 'L'évolution du droit et des institutions a-t-elle été identique?' in École nationale du patrimoine, *Patrimoine culturel, patrimoine naturel, colloque 12 et 13 décembre 1994* (Paris: La documentation française, 1995), 39-49.
[52] SNPN Sécretaire d'État à l'Éducation Nationale, Secrétaire Général des Beaux-Arts to Vice-Président de la Société Nationale d'Acclimatation de France, Directeur Général des Réserves, 22 October 1943.
[53] Zaretsky, *Cock and Bull Stories*, 135.

advertisements and other eyesores were to be restricted. [54] In 1941, the Secretary of State for National Education reported to Pétain that advertising boards were the 'most displeasing and tyrannical' form of publicity and offended 'individual liberties.' Advertisements undermined the 'good taste' of 'our most famous monuments, the picturesque shores and banks of our lakes and rivers, [and]... our magnificent mountain panoramas,' sites which should encourage silent admiration and contemplation (*recueillement*).' Moreover, as the Secretary of State reminded Pétain, 'the national interest demands more than ever' that 'our marvellous country' is 'impeccably maintained (*impeccablement tenu*).' [55] The Secretary of State for Communications also urged the protection of artistic monuments and natural sites as France was a 'rural civilisation' and these sites would become important for tourism after the war. [56]

Pressure for heritage preservation came from local authorities. In 1943, the prefect of the Alpes-Maritimes wanted 250,000 francs to maintain 'picturesque sites and historical monuments.' The *département's* Service for Architecture and Urbanism also stressed that more needed to be done than simply classifying sites. Instead, it was a case of actively 'protecting them and ensuring their potential' (*les mettre en valeur*). [57] Protecting and promoting natural and historical sites was an economic necessity, as communes sought to make the most of their surrounding landscapes. Toulon's tourist office devised a novel scheme to bring visitors and money to the town after its demilitarisation had

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[54] MAP 80/1/30 Sécrétaire d'État à l'Éducation Nationale to Préfets, Circular no.111, 9 October 1943. See also ADAM 717 W 409 Sécretaire d'État à l'Éducation Nationale to Préfets, Circular no. 107, 12 August 1943.

[55] MAP 80/1/29 Sécretaire d'État à l'Éducation Nationale, 'Rapport au Maréchal de France, chef de l'État français,' [n.d.]

[56] ADI 170 M 8bis Secrétariat d'Etat aux Communications, Commissarait au Tourisme, 'Compte-rendu sténographique de l'exposé fait par M. Henry de Ségogne, Commissaire au Tourisme lors de la récente installation d'un Comité régional, August 1943, 1-4.

[57] ADAM 717 W 409 Champsaur, 'Rapport du Directeur Général: Monuments et Sites Pittoresques, Entretien et Conservation – Participation du Département,' Nice, 25 Sept 1943.

deprived it of a major source of income. In effect they proposed a *retour à la terre* in Toulon, suggesting that the town promote its 'natural riches, which cost nothing and if intelligently exploited could become a source of profit for all the population.' These natural riches were Toulon's 'incomparable situation at the bottom of a marvellous harbour, a real expanse of azure.' The town, protected by mountains, also boasted an excellent climate for winter visitors, who could enjoy hunting and fishing in and around the town. The tourist office believed it should promote holidays that emphasised 'hygiene and salubity' and develop the conservation of 'sites, monuments, [and] forests.'[58]

In 1943, this legislative programme was portrayed as part and parcel of Vichy's rebuilding of France; 'the present law – it must be underlined – is not dictated by aesthetic considerations of a purely speculative nature but integrates itself in the restoration programme to which this government is dedicated.' [59] The classification of the Basse-Camargue therefore needs to be treated as a part of Vichy's "back to the land" rhetoric and its plans to restore France. Moreover, the fact that the Camargue was seen as a wild, unpopulated landscape also suggests that we need to revise assumptions that the *retour à la terre* exclusively targeted cultivated land.

In term of nature preservation, the classification of the Basse-Camargue was a largely benign outcome of Vichy's "back to the land" philosophy. More sinister was its creation of an internment camp for Roma in the northern part of the Camargue near the village of Saliers, which was directly informed by

[58] ADV 2 W 118 Syndicat d'initiative de Toulon, 'Le tourisme au service de la reprise économique (suggestions et projets),' presented to the Préfet du Var, 26 February 1941, 1-3.
[59] MAP 80/1/28 [n.a.] 'Note sur la loi relative à la protection des sites et des paysages,' 3 January 1943.

traditional representations of the wetlands' folklore and landscape. The Camargue itself was to aid the "rehabilitation" of the camp's inmates.

Saliers: a 'gay and harmonious note' in the Camargue?

Vichy appears to have paid careful attention to the romantic and traditional representations of the Camargue when planning Saliers camp. Although Vichy propaganda did not directly target Roma communities, it conducted a policy of surveillance, control, and eventually internment against this marginal and often mobile population, which built on discriminatory laws introduced by the Third Republic, such as the law of 6 April 1940 which banned 'the circulation of nomads...across the totality of metropolitan territory for the duration of the war.' In all, the regime interned approximately 3,000 Roma, some of whom were deported to concentration camps in Germany. [60] Saliers camp was unique for two main reasons. Firstly, it was the only camp in France established solely for Roma. Secondly, it appears to be the sole camp where the natural environment was to contribute to the inmates' "re-education." In general, locations of internment camps in Vichy France were more influenced by the presence of existing camps (often established during the latter days of Third Republic) and factors of expediency and urgency than careful considerations of the most suitable environment in which to situate the camp. [61] Deliberately or not, the natural environments in which the camps were located were often harsh and contributed to the internees' misery. For instance, strong winds battered

[60] See Denis Peschanski, *Les Tsiganes en France, 1939-1946* (Paris: CNRS, 1994), 39, 72. French persecution of the Roma took place within a wider Nazi-led persecution of this population. See Ian Hancock, 'Romanies and the Holocaust: A Re-evaluation and Overview,' in Dan Stone (ed.), *The Historiography of the Holocaust* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 383-96.
[61] Peschanski, 'La France des camps,' 106.

Rivesaltes camp, Argelès camp was prone to flooding, pervasive sand made life all the more unbearable at Saint-Cyprien, and inmates were literally sucked into the mud at Gurs. [62] In contrast to the establishment of other camps, Vichy carefully chose the location of Saliers; the Camargue's landscape was to be an integral part of the regime's re-educational and propaganda aims.

Vichy argued that there were 'psychological' as well as 'material' reasons to choose a site in the Camargue. Referring to a Roma pilgrimage to Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, Jacques van Migom, the architect of the camp, claimed that 'the *gitans* consider... this region as the cradle of their race.' Supposedly, therefore, Roma would be happy to settle in the area (an argument supported by Baroncelli who professed knowledge of the customs of the "*nomades*" and declared himself 'favourable to this project'). [63] Presumably, van Migom felt that the Roma's spiritual connections with the Camargue would encourage them to renounce their nomadic lifestyle. As part of this process of creating a stable population, the inmates were to engage in work to which they were supposedly 'particularly suited,' such as basketry. Again, the Camargue was an ideal site in which such activity could flourish. The internees were to make use of the area's 'very rich flora,' exploiting nearby willow, reed and other plants. Plans were even mooted to enhance the area's flora by planting more willows. [64]

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[62] Henri Cadier, avec le concours de Roger Benoît, Henri Manen, Monique M, P. Toureille, A. Freudenberg, *Le Calvaire d'Israël et la solidatité chrétienne* (Genève: Les Éditions Labor et Fides, [n.d.]), 33-4; René S Kapel, *Un rabbin dans la tourmente (1940-1944): dans les camps d'internement et au sein de l'Organisation Juive de Combat* (Paris: Éditions du Centre, 1986), 20; Joseph Weill, *Contribution à l'histoire des camps d'internement dans l'Anti-France* (Paris: Centre de documentation Juive Contemporaine, 1946), 32.

[63] ADBDR 97 W 24, 'Regroupement en Haute Camargue des nomades de la zone libre,' minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 1942. Baroncelli considering Roma to have a racial link with Native Americans. He was also present at the opening of Saliers in 1942. See Zaretsky, *Cock and Bull Stories*, 135.

[64] 'Regroupement en Haute Camargue des nomades de la zone libre.'

In addition, Vichy wanted Saliers to act as a propaganda tool; a carefully designed camp sensitive to the inmates supposed needs would refute foreign criticism of the dire conditions in France's internment camps. Van Migom argued that 'above all, Saliers camp must be an instrument of government propaganda.' He aimed to give the camp a village-like appearance and make allowances for the continuation of family life and respect for the internees' 'customs and beliefs.' [65]

Van Migom– who was also the Bouches-du-Rhône's architect for historical monuments – therefore took into account the local landscape, designing the camp as a "traditional" Camargue-style village made of huts built with local materials. According to his design rationale, a camp of rows of wooden barracks would be unsuitable in the Camargue as the government had just classified part of the area as a protected natural site. The architect believed that his design would 'integrate' Saliers 'into the landscape,' and that it would appear in the Camargue plains as 'a gay and harmonious note.' He also planned for the inmates themselves to build the camp using local materials, such as reeds, to construct Camargue-style huts (rather optimistically, given their hostility to the camp, he envisaged the local population sharing their knowledge of local building techniques with the Roma). In addition, flora common to the Camargue would form 'hedges of protection against the wind.'[66]

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[65] Quoted in Francis Bertrand and Jacques Grandjonc, 'Un "ancien camp de Bohémiens": Saliers,' in Grandjonc and Grundtner, *Zone d'ombres*, 292. There were other factors leading to the creation of the camp. Gilbert Lesage of the Service social des étrangers believed that the creation of the camp would prevent deportation of Roma to Germany and Eastern Europe. See Bertrand and Grandjonc, 'Un "ancien camp de Bohémiens": Saliers,' 293.

[66] See Francis Bertrand and Jacques Grandjonc, 'Un ancien camp des bohémiens: Saliers,' in *Les Camps en Provence*, 167; and 'Regroupement en Haute Camargue des nomades de la zone libre.' Camargue huts were apparently in vogue in Vichy France; a report for the Musée national de arts et traditions populaires described them as 'one of the most beautiful examples of architecture' because of its practicality and economy. See *Cabanes de Camargue: Documents sur*

However, the Camargue-style huts were wholly unsuitable as accommodation. As well as being hopelessly overcrowded, the cabins provided inadequate shelter from rats and insects. A medical inspector noted that the lack of ceilings in the huts meant that their inhabitants were in 'direct contact' with the 'parasites and animals' that lived in the roof, and because there was no electric lighting in the huts, doors were left open to let the light in, which also allowed rats and insects to enter the buildings. [67] The huts also created hygiene problems as their thatched roofs posed a fire risk and meant that disinfectants could not be used. [68] The Under-Prefect of Arles highlighted this tension between the huts' aesthetics and functionality and urged that before the camp was extended a solution that simultaneously reconciled the demands of hygiene and 'aesthetic concerns' must be found.[69]

It is important, however, not to take the authorities' aesthetic and re-educational aims at face value as there were more practical – and cynical – reasons for building the camp at Saliers. One was its relative isolation, away from heavily populated areas as officials were keen to avoid contact between the Roma and the local population, as they were well aware of the latter's hostility towards *nomades*. [70] The mayor of Arles reported that he had received protests from residents of Saliers who were 'extremely upset' at the thought of having such 'regrettable' and 'dangerous' neighbours. He argued that Saliers, 'one of the

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l'architecture traditionnelle au début du XXe siècle (Musée Camarguais: Parc Naturel Régional de Camargue [n.d.]).

[67] Quoted in Bertrand and Grandjonc, 'Ancien camp des bohémiens,' in *Les Camps en Provence*, 160, 173. Ten to fifteen internees slept in a space designed for one inhabitant and a horse.

[68] ADBDR 97 W 24 Dr. J. Picard, Bureau municipal d'Hygiène, Ville d'Arles, to Sous-Préfet de l'Arrondissement d'Arles, 9 October 1943.

[69] ADBDR 97 W 24 Sous-Préfet de l'Arrondissement d'Arles to M. Fourcade, Direction de l'Administration de la Police, Secrétariat à la Police, Ministère Secrétariat de l'Intérieur à Vichy, 13 October 1943.

[70] See ADBDR 142 W 76 Conseiller d'État Sécretaire Général à la Police to Préfet régional, 21 September 1942; and ADBDR 97 W 24 Sous-Préfet de l'Arrondissement d'Arles to Intendant des Services de Police, Marseille, 21 December 1942.

most prosperous [villages] of the Camargue' would become 'uninhabitable' if the camp were built there and that Roma would pose a 'permanent threat' to local farms. [71] And some local farmers did fear for their property. One of them, opposing plans to extend the camp, argued that it would be unfortunate for another property to be 'infested' by the camp. [72] Poor drainage within the camp reportedly caused problems outside its boundaries. The inmates had established a place to wash their clothes to the south of the camp by setting up barrages in a canal to collect water. The head of the local sewerage association complained that this would bring a 'grave prejudice' to local agriculture, particularly as stagnant water in ditches created problems for farmers in the summer months. [73]

Another reason for the choice of the site was that officials considered the land to be worthless and 'absolutely unsuitable' for any kind of agriculture. [74] The Under-Prefect of Arles described the site as 'an arid steppe' with an extremely high salt content. [75] An agricultural engineer agreed, doubting that the terrain was suitable for the cultivation of crops; all that grew there were 'salicorna, tufts of bulrushes, and some tamarinds.'[76] The uncultivated aspect of the Camargue was therefore advantageous for Vichy; building the camp on a salty steppe meant that no harm was caused to agriculture. It also conferred a purpose to land which would otherwise have been classed as "wasteland." In this sense, internment camps incorporated uncultivated spaces into Vichy's project for the renewal of France, thereby making the land "productive."

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[71] AMA Registre des délibérations du conseil municipal, 'Protestation contre l'établissement d'un camp de Gitans (Commune d'Arles),' 29 June 1942.
[72] ADBDR 97 W 24 René Tuelon to Sous-Préfet de l'Arrondissement d'Arles, 2 October 1942.
[73] ADBDR 142 W 76 Monsieur le Directeur de l'Association de l'Égout de Saliers, to Monsieur le Commandant du Camp de Gitans de Saliers, 24 May 1944.
[74] ADBDR 142 W 76 Sous-Préfet de l'Arrondissement d'Arles to Intendant des Services de Police, Marseille, 7 October 1942, 1.
[75] ADBDR 97 W 24 Sous-Préfet de l'Arrondissement d'Arles to Préfet des Bouches-du-Rhône, 7 October 1942.
[76] ADBDR 142 W 76 Letter from M. Nou-de-la-Houpliere, Ingénieur agricole, 26 June 1942.

However, the harshness of the Camargue's natural environment disrupted life in the camp and helped thwart the aesthetic ambitions of the authorities and its role as a propaganda tool. Saliers was situated near marshlands on a site that did not naturally drain well, a problem made worse by poor water and drainage facilities. Given the lack of refuse collection, the Under-Prefect of Arles feared that the winter rains would turn the site into a 'cesspit.' [77] Furthermore, the remoteness of the camp served to heighten the inmates' sense of isolation. One of them remembers that 'we really had the sensation that they placed us here to forget about us, to make us disappear, and that we could all die there without anyone realising.' [78]

While the Camargue was, and still is, celebrated for its apparently wild and remote character, it was not an easy environment to live in. Its unique climate made life extremely difficult for Saliers' inmates. Temperatures reached uncomfortable extremes, especially in the summer months, and the aforementioned winds, such as the *mistral*, hammered across the Camargue, often reaching over 100 kilometres per hour (the area is calm only about one-fifth of the time). In addition, the inmates had to contend with the wetlands' twenty-four varieties of mosquitoes. [79] Unsurprisingly, one former internee remembers that 'lots of people were ill. The camp was full of mosquitoes. It was unbearable.' [80] Mathieu Pernot, a photographer who recently completed an oral history project with former Saliers inmates, concludes that the inmates seemed to

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[77] ABBDR 142 W 76 Sous-Préfet de l'Arrondissement d'Arles to Intendant des Services de Police à Marseille, 7 October 1942.
[78] Quoted in Mathieu Pernot, 'Les mémoires de Saliers: des archives sédentaires aux récits des nomades,' in Mathieu Pernot, *Un camp pour les bohémians: mémoires du camp d'internement pour nomades de Saliers* (Arles: Actes Suds, 2001), 39.
[79] Duncan, *Horses and Grasses*, 45; and Tallon, *La Réserve zoologique et botanique de Camargue*, 7.
[80] Roger Demetrion, quoted in Pernot, *Camp pour les bohémiens*, 90.

suffer ' the most' from the site's location in the Camargue as they were battered by the *mistral* wind in winter and sweltered under the sun in summer. [81]

In the end, officials realised that the choice of site had been a mistake. As the Under-Prefect of Arles admitted in July 1944:

> Errors were committed not only in the choice of the terrain upon which the camp was built, but also in the conception itself of the camp. Situated on the edge of a marsh, the terrain itself is a former swamp ... which the least [amount of] rain floods or makes sodden. No line of trees shelter it from the dominant winds and the *mistral* blows with a singular violence, especially in winter. [82]

Alongside overcrowding, malnutrition, and the harshness of Vichy's discriminatory policy against the Roma, the natural environment of the Camargue seriously worsened the condition of the inmates and undermined the camp's propaganda and settlement aims. In its conception of the camp, Vichy had considered the nature of the Camargue an ally; in the end it proved to be an enemy. Meanwhile, the SNAF faced a formidable battle to protect the reserve from the activities of both Axis and Allied troops.

The reserve in wartime

It seems almost self-evident that nature conservation is one of the first casualties of war. National defence, military mobilisation, food and natural resource shortages all make the protection of fauna and flora seem like a luxury.

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[81] Pernot, 'Les mémoires de Saliers: des archives sédentaires aux récits des nomades,' 39.
[82] Quoted in Marie-Christine Hubert, 'Le campe de nomades de Saliers, 1942-44,' in Pernot, *Camp pour les bohémiens*, 28.

a relic of peacetime. [83] Yet after the outbreak of war in 1939, concerns were expressed in France about the fate of nature. Speaking with regard to France's colonies, H. Humbert, Professor at the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris, addressed the issue at the Academy for Colonial Sciences in February 1940:

> It can seem, at first sight, inopportune to raise, in the present circumstances, the question of the nature protection in our overseas territories. So many problems of capital importance demand the attention of the governments of our colonies, that the consideration of any subject not relating to immediate exigencies must be almost inevitably postponed.
>
> Is nature protection one of those areas which can be overlooked until the end of the hostilities without serious inconvenience in favour of more imperative preoccupations, or, *au contraire*, does it merit retaining, even in wartime, the attention of those responsible for the future of our colonies? [84]

For Humbert, nature protection was worth pursuing in war time because in its absence 'natives and Europeans' might be tempted to slip back into their destructive habits in forests and other habitats. [85] Humbert's concerns were echoed across the Atlantic by Henry Baldwin Ward, a professor at the University of Illinois, who urged the USA to take steps to conserve its natural resources as 'totalitarian warfare not only destroys life and scatters the remnants of the people but makes levies on natural resources that provide for their extinction.' As a consequence, 'the greatest problem of the future we face to-day is not merely the

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[83] More empirical research is needed on this subject. One exception is Kurk Dorsey, 'Compromising on Conservation: World War II and American Leadership in Whaling Diplomacy,' in Russell and Tucker, *Natural Enemy, Natural Ally*, 252-69.

[84] H. Humbert *La protection de la nature dans les territoires d'outre-mer pendant la guerre: communication faite à l'Academie des sciences coloniales 21 Février 1940* (Paris: Société d'Éditions géographiques, maritimes, et coloniales, 1940), 1.

[85] Ibid. 7-8.

winning of the war but the condition of the world at its close.' [86] As the example of the Camargue shows, Humbert and Ward were not alone in advocating the protection of nature during wartime, as the SNAF and its supporters battled to protect the reserve from the destructive effects of modern, mechanised warfare and secure its integrity for the future. [87]

In order to galvanise itself and justify nature protection at a time when France's present and future seemed so uncertain, the SNAF elevated it to an act of patriotic duty. The SNAF would secure France's most important natural sites so that the country could benefit from them in peacetime. To accomplish this, its Central Council took charge of the reserves and reduced their management to 'the essential.' According to Bressou, this strategy would ensure that when 'peace arrives once again, the Société d'Acclimatation... will have succeeded in safeguarding some of [France's] most precious natural treasures (*quelques-unes de nos plus sûres richesses naturelles*), [and] will be able to usefully contribute to the restoration of our most beautiful and dear nation.' [88]

Aside from the plans to modernise the Basse-Camargue, war created a multitude of problems for the SNAF. Communications were disrupted between its Paris headquarters and its reserves in the Alps, Pyrenees, and Camargue.[89] In addition, during the phoney war, the Camargue reserve lost one of its guards to military mobilisation and Tallon was requisitioned to work in a factory (although he was eventually able to transfer back to the region). After defeat in 1940, however, the reserve was able to run at full personnel levels again even if, as

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[86] Henry Baldwin Ward, 'Warfare and Natural Resources,' *Science* 2544 (1 October 1943), 292.
[87] On the increased mechanisation of warfare, see Daniel Pick, *War Machine: The Rationalisation of Slaughter in the Modern Age* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 165-77.
[88] Bressou, 'Actes des Réserves de la Société nationale d'acclimatation de France: Commission générale des réserves,' 37.
[89] Ibid. 37.

elsewhere in France, problems existed of a material nature; food was in short supply and it was harder to travel around the reserve due to fuel shortages. Nonetheless, the reserve staff managed to receive a limited number of scientists and other visitors, tag birds, and establish new research stations. [90]

In comparison to the SNAF's alpine Lauzanier reserve, the Camargue seemed to be faring exceptionally well in the early stages of the war. Lauzanier was totally occupied by Italian troops, denying SNAF personnel access to the reserve, which led to increased poaching and damage to forest plantations. [91] This military occupation followed one by French troops in the late 1930s, who had used Lauzanier for target practice, which according to the SNAF, 'caused a grave prejudice to the tranquillity of the fauna.' [92]

The Camargue, however, faced a massive challenge from that most modern of war machines, the aeroplane. This was not a new threat. Just after the First World War, Folco de Baroncelli had protested the French air force's use of airspace above the Camargue. The French planes had disrupted the Camargue's ecosystem, scaring local bird life with their noise, including the flamingos that bred in the area, and presumably causing injury and death through collisions. Outraged, de Baroncelli demanded that 'the responsible authorities give the most severe orders that such acts of savagery never again happen.' [93] Even after the foundation of the reserve, similar collisions between birds and airplanes

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[90] 'Actes de la Réserve zoologique et botanique de Camargue,' *Conférences de la Société nationale d'acclimatation de France: actes de réserves de la Société nationale d'acclimatation de France*, No. 24, 1940-1941, 41-51.

[91] See 'Actes de la Réserve du Lauzanier,' No. 5, 1940-1941, *Conférences de la Société nationale d'acclimatation de France: actes de réserves de la Société nationale d'acclimatation de France*, No. 24, 1940-1941, 84.

[92] 'Actes des réserves de la Société nationale d'acclimatation de France. Commission générale des réserves: extraits du procès-verbal de la réunion du 9 décembre 1937,' in *Bulletin de la Société nationale d'acclimatation de France*, 85th Year, January-February 1938, 1.

[93] Quoted in Zaretsky, *Cock and Bull Stories*, 118-9. Zaretsky observes that 'in light of the slaughter just ended in Europe such rhetoric seems misplaced.'

continued to occur. Day reported the story of a German airman who flew at very low altitude across the étang de Fangassieri, the feeding ground for 4,000 flamingos. Startled, many of the birds flew up, crashed into the plane, and fell back into the water injured or dead. According to Day, Tallon had 'made such protests in the proper quarters that airmen are now forbidden to cross that part of the Camargue.' [94] During the Second World War, however, the problems posed by planes returned with a vengeance.

That the Camargue was continuously earmarked as a suitable location for aerial training is no surprise. As the Minster for the French air force noted in 1938, training sites should be established in areas 'of low population density and minor cultivation... as well as by the coast.' [95] The Camargue fitted the bill perfectly and during the 1939-1940 combats, the French air force carried out target practice over the wetlands. [96] This development threatened to prevent the surveillance of the reserve, as well as dispersing its flamingos and other wildlife. However, the reserve was spared by the use of non-explosive shots and the 'unfortunate events of June 1940' when France was defeated. [97]

Yet the aerial threat to the reserve did not end there, as from January 1941 onwards French military authorities revived their plans to transform the Basse-Camargue into a target zone. Bressou protested this decision, arguing that it ignored the reserve's 'scientific interest' and threatened to be 'fatal to [its] very

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[94] Day, *Where the Mistral Blows*, 189-90.

[95] Service historique de l'Armée d'Air (henceforth SHAA) 2 B 153 Ministre de l'Air to Général Commandant la 1° Région Aérienne, Dijon; Général Commandant la 2° Région Aérienne, Paris; Général Commandant la 3° Région Aérienne, Tours; Général Commandant la 4° Région Aérienne, Aix-en-Provence; and Général Commandant la 5° Région Aérienne, Alger, 'Recherche de champs de tir,' 1 July 1938.

[96] Clément Bressou, 'Actes de la Réserve zoologique et botanique de Camargue, No. 25, 1942-1947,' *La Terre et la Vie*, 96th year, No. 2, Numéro spécial (1949), 43.

[97] 'Actes de la Réserve zoologique et botanique de Camargue, No. 24 1940-1941,' in *Conférences de la Société nationale d'acclimatation de France: Actes de réserves de la Société nationale d'acclimatation de France pour 1940 et 1941*, included in *Société nationale d'acclimatation de France, Conférences*, Summer and Autumn 1941, Winter 1942, 42.

existence,' possibly leading to the 'immediate, total, and definitive disappearance of the Camargue's original avifauna.' [98] Nonetheless, there was some room for negotiation with the authorities and the SNAF mobilised to challenge the establishment of the firing ground. A petition was sent to the Minister for National Defence, as well as to the Minister for the Air Force, the Minister for National Education (who had responsibility for the protection of monuments and sites), the Prefect of the Bouches-du-Rhône, and the head of the regional air force. In addition, Alais, Froges, et Camargue (which was, strictly speaking, the reserve's landowner), the head of the Faculty of Sciences at the University of Marseille, and the Forestry Conservator in Aix-en-Provence, as well as local associations in the Camargue, joined the protests. [99]

France's scientific community also mobilised itself, drawing attention to the reserve's scientific importance, both nationally and internationally. These efforts culminated in a motion unanimously passed by the Assembly of Museum Professors on 15 February 1941, which described the Basse-Camargue as 'the most important of the rare natural reserves of our country,' as it sheltered unique species of birds and was a major centre of scientific research. The professors argued that the establishment of an aerial firing ground would result in the 'immediate destruction of the fauna and flora which is strictly protected' and demanded that these plans 'be abandoned.' [100] This campaign ultimately met with some success, limiting and shortening the extent of the damages.

However, it was not just the French air force that had designs on the Camargue as, in turn, the German air force singled out the wetlands for target practice. In August 1943 signs appeared on the edge of the Vaccarès reading

[98] Bressou, 'Actes des réserves de la Société nationale d'acclimatation de France,' 37-8.
[99] Ibid. 38-9.
[100] Quoted in ibid. 39.

'Aviation firing ground. Access to the *étang* prohibited. Danger of death.' As if to add credence to this warning, planes were spotted dropping bombs over the shoreline of the Mornès island. [101] Tallon was extremely concerned about these plans. Writing to the head of the Faculty of Science at the University of Marseille, he outlined the potential consequences of the German air force's intentions, which included the disappearance of avifauna, the destruction of the Rièges wood, restricted access to the reserve, and the end of eel fishing in the Vaccarès, which represented a loss both for the reserve's income and local food supplies. [102] Tallon expressed surprise at German plans as he had recently received a visit from Dr. Panzer, Director of Danzig Museum, German army officer, and delegate from the German Office of the Protection of Nature charged with liaising with French nature reserves, who had come to the Camargue in order to see how the reserve could be protected from 'the current circumstances.' [103]

Increased bombing also threatened to cause more problems for the Camargue's *gardiens* (cowboys) who grazed their herds across the watery expanses of the Basse-Camargue. Allied aircraft already made their lives difficult. One *gardien* remembers how after bombing raids over Arles, Allied planes deposited unused bombs over the Vaccarès in order to carry less weight on their flight back to base. [104] Silt-filled shell holes created an unpredictable terrain and crossing the area became a 'lottery.' [105]

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[101] RNC Gabriel Tallon to Léo Kuyten, 21 September 1943. The German air force also planned to create an 'exercise terrain' for planes on the neighbouring Crau plain. See AMA H 247 Under-Prefect of Arles to Mayor of Arles, 13 April 1943.
[102] ADBDR 76 W 128 Gabriel Tallon to Doyen de la Faculté des Sciences de Marseille, 23 September 1943, 1. For more on the fishing see RNC Gabriel Tallon to Campagnie Alais Froges et Camargue, 7 February 1944.
[103] Tallon to Doyen de la Faculté des Sciences, 1.
[104] René Jalabert, quoted in Annelyse Chevalier, *Le Bois des Rièges: Coeur de la Camargue, entre mythe et réalité, récits de gardiens, manadiers, pêcheurs et autre camarguias*...(Sommières: Editions Arnaud-Gilles, 2004), *Le Bois des Rièges*, 84.
[105] René Lambert, quoted in Chevalier, *Le Bois des Rièges*, 125.

Like the French and German air forces, US military authorities established an aviation firing ground over the Camargue. In February 1945, Tallon reported that US planes were targeting the tip of the Mornès (just as German planes had done) and firing machine guns and depositing light bombs over a ten kilometre area; 'the consequences are disastrous for the reserve... in particular, the Rièges wood, completely included in the zone, will be destroyed.' [106] Tallon feared that if destroyed, the wood (which was the only surviving Phoenician juniper forest in France) 'would fail to regenerate.' In addition, the affected zone lay within the classified area of the Camargue and constituted the only un-mined area of the reserve, meaning that once target practice began, the functioning of the reserve would effectively cease. [107] The US air force's activities in the Camargue had reportedly already completely chased away the flamingos, which had been forced to seek sanctuary elsewhere.[108]

On both occasions, the SNAF campaigned once again to limit the effects of the target practice, lobbying both German military authorities and the US army. [109] As in 1941, scientists and forestry officials joined the protests, demonstrating the reserve's reputation in France and (according, at least, to Bressou) overseas. [110] Appeals to Camargue's internationally renowned landscape were an important weapon in the defence of the reserve. With regard to the German plans, the Minister for National Education, on the initiative of the

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[106] RNC Gabriel Tallon to Monsieur Rossigneux, Chef du Contintieux, Compagnie Alais, Froges and Camargue, 22 March 1945.
[107] CACAN 19771615/77 Gabriel Tallon, 'Création d'un camp de bombardement pour les aviateurs américains en Basse-Camargue,' 10 February 1945.
[108] CACAN 19771615/77 Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Aix-en-Provence to Directeur Général des Eaux et Forêts, 'Réserve de la Camargue, champ de tir aérien,' 23 April 1945. See also Etienne Gallet, *Les Flamants roses de Camargue* (Lausanne: Librairie Payot, 1949), 124.
[109] Officials from the reserve wrote to Professor Truger in Avignon and the German Airforce commander at Istres, but apparently failed to receive a reply. See Tallon to Doyen de la Faculté des Sciences, 1.
[110] Bressou, 'Actes de la Réserve zoologique et botanique de Camargue, No. 25, 1942-1947,' 44.

Head of the Faculty of Sciences at the University of Marseille, asked the German Authorities to 'respect the character of a site of which the conservation presents a general interest which goes beyond the simply national.' [111]

Similarly, the Forestry Conservator in Aix-en-Provence reassured Tallon that he would do 'everything in [his] power' to help with the campaign against the US air force's plans, although he admitted that 'the game (*partie*) would be hard to win as our allies find it hard to accept reclamations of this nature [as] they believe the end justifies the means.' [112] Yet on both occasions, it seems that the SNAF's efforts met with some success as military authorities issued orders restricting the use of the Vaccarès, meaning that the damage to the reserve was 'less important than we had the right to fear.' [113]

The attempts to protect the reserve against the potentially devastating effects of the aerial testing zones suggest that nature preservation remained a live issue during the war and that France's naturalists and scientists battled to save what they could of France's natural heritage. Furthermore, it appears that there was some limited room for manoeuvre with French, German, and US military authorities on this matter. In this case, as in their attempt to limit modernisation of the area's agriculture, the Camargue's defenders enjoyed some success in protecting the landscape against the destructiveness of modern warfare through their protests and lobbying. However, they had less room for manoeuvre once the Germany military incorporated the Camargue within its strategy for defending France against Allied attack.

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[111] ADBDR 76 W 128 Ministre Secrétaire d'Etat à l'Education Nationale to Préfet Délégué des Bouches-du-Rhône, 3ème Division, 1er Bureau, 'Bouches-du-Rhône – Etang de Vaccarès,' 10 November 1943.
[112] CACAN 19771615/77 Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Aix-en-Provence to Gabriel Tallon, 15 February 1945. These protests need to be seen within the wider context of Franco-Allied relations following the Liberation of France. See Footitt, *War and Liberation*.
[113] Bressou, 'Actes de la Réserve zoologique et botanique de Camargue, No. 25, 1942-1947,' 44.

Floods and fortifications: the German army in the Camargue

The Camargue represented different things to different people. For some, it was a cradle of Provencal traditions. For others, it was an unparalleled nature reserve. For Vichy modernisers, it was a land of unrealised agricultural potential. For the German army, however, it was an area whose natural defences needed strengthening. For a start, the Germans laid barbed wire and over 300,000 mines in the Basse-Camargue. [114] These defences were complemented by anti-tank devices, bunkers, turrets, and artillery posts placed throughout the lower Camargue, particularly along its coastline. [115] Mines and other defences served to restrict Tallon's and his staff's access to the lower sections of the reserve, as well as causing accidents involving humans, bulls, and sheep (although these didn't take place on the reserve itself). [116] The mines also caused more indirect problems for the reserve as fishermen, who could no longer fish freely in the Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer region because of the risk of explosives, requested the right to fish in the Vaccarès. Tallon resisted this move, citing the paucity of fish stocks and claiming that the request was merely a ploy from local poachers to gain access to the much-coveted fish of the Vaccarès.[117]

Yet, German defences were not necessarily detrimental to wildlife. In 1949, *The Times*' special correspondent suggested that the mines had helped protect the Camargue's flamingos by keeping them free from human interference.

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[114] Ibid. 45.
[115] See Alain Chazette, 'Les défenses allemandes en Camargue.' 44-54. Article supplied by Eric Coulet, Director of the Réserve Naturelle de la Camargue.
[116] Bressou, 'Actes de la Réserve zoologique et botanique de Camargue, No. 25, 1942-1947.' 45.
[117] RNC Tallon to Rossigneux.

[118] And in the neighbouring Crau, birds used the metre-high stone cairns erected by German troops to prevent Allied planes from landing for perching and nesting sites. [119]

Yet these (unintentional) benefits to wildlife were outweighed by plans to submerge the Camargue. As the war progressed and the threat of an Allied invasion of France increased, German forces tightened their control over the Camargue. As a consequence, the Camargue was drawn deeper into the totalising momentum of modern warfare. German submersion plans threatened to radically transform the Camargue's environment, demonstrating that although the German authorities had an officer to liaise with French nature reserves (the aforementioned Dr Panzer), military considerations overrode nature protection.

Plans to flood the Camargue posed a more serious threat to the wetlands' survival and threatened to destroy both traditionalist and modernist aspirations for the Camargue as a refuge for wildlife and a productive centre of agriculture respectively. On 14 February 1944, German authorities requested that the Regional Prefect take steps to provoke the flooding of the Camargue (and the Vallée des Baux which lay to the north) for 'urgent military reasons,' a move which constituted the greatest threat to the Camargue's environment during the war. [120] After consulting the German authorities, the Regional Prefect informed Pierre Laval, the head of government, that he believed that German authorities

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[118] Special Correspondent, 'A Trip to the Camargue: Main European Gateway for Migrant Birds, *The Times*, 28 May 1949, 6.

[119] Hoffman, 'Ecological Sketch of the Camargue,' 344. In 1960, Monica Krippner noted that 'no one has since bothered to demolish the cairns – indeed why should they? – and so they remain to puzzle itinerant travellers who pass this way and to baffle some archaeologist a thousand years hence.' *Discovering the Camargue* (London: Hutchinson, 1960), 120.

[120] ADBDR 76 W 128 Major General Elster, État-Major Principal de Liaison 894, Marseille, 14 February 1944.

intended to maintain water levels at winter levels throughout the year, a situation that would prove difficult to control. [121]

The flooding scheme threatened to undo the conditions that kept the Camargue in its current state. A detailed Ponts et Chaussées report outlined how this would happen; the Camargue's environment relied on the gradual draining of higher fields and marshes into the Vaccarès and ultimately to the sea, a process aided by drainage works and canals. For the system to work, the *étangs* needed to be kept at as low a level as possible as this aided the drainage of water from the higher ground and maintained a sufficiently low table of salty water to permit crop cultivation. As high sea levels often corresponded with periods of high precipitation, gates in the sea dyke allowed water out from the Vaccarès when conditions at sea allowed it. The strong northern *mistral* wind presented an additional danger when water levels in the *étangs* were high, as it could cause water to surge over the sea dyke, potentially destroying it, along with the valuable salt industries centred on Salin-de-Giraud. [122] The German authorities envisaged blocking the gate of the sea dyke, thereby isolating the Vaccarès, and causing its water level to rise by pumping an increased volume of water from the Rhône. [123]

Unsurprisingly, this demand caused grave concerns amongst French officials and the SNAF. Tallon believed that mixing fresh and salty water would 'drastically alter (*bouleverserait*) all the biological conditions' of the reserve. He predicted that the unique Rièges wood and other vegetation would die out, the

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[121] ADBDR 76 W 128 J. F. Bussière, Préfet de la Région de Marseille, to Pierre Laval, Chef du Gouvernement, 22 February 1944.
[122] ADBDR 76 W 128 Ingénieur des Ponts et Chaussées de l'Arrondissement d'Arles, 'Note sur l'inondation de la Camargue ordonnée par les autorités allemandes d'occupation,' 18 March 1944.
[123] ADBDR 76 W 128 Ingénieur du Génie Rural to Directeur Général du Génie Rural et de l'Hydraulique Agricole, 21 March 1944.

reserve's buildings would be destroyed, and that the reserve's guards and visitors would be unable to carry out their tasks. As he did in opposition to aviation testing grounds, Tallon stressed the scientific and biological importance of the reserve which was known throughout the world 'and notably in Germany.' [124] The Bouches-du-Rhône's architect for historical monuments echoed these concerns, arguing that the submersion of the Vaccarès would result in the 'complete destruction of the flora and fauna' of the reserve, the protection of which was 'indispensable.' In general, any change to the water system in the Camargue would 'lead to the destruction of this very interesting region.' [125] French protests about the destruction of monuments were apparently noted by the German authorities.[126]

In addition to the destruction of the reserve, local state officials feared that the flooding would necessitate the evacuation of 12,000 people from the Camargue, submerge pastureland, destroy cultivated land, threaten cattle breeding, and damage the valuable salt industry. [127] This latter point deeply concerned officials with responsibility for industry, who believed that the flooding would wash the salt pans out to sea, halting production, and resulting in the loss of 260,000 tons of salt stocks. They argued that the flooding would damage German interests as it would deprive the factories that supplied the occupier with products derived from salt (such as bromine).[128]

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[124] ADBDR 76 W 128 Gabriel Tallon, 'Rapport de G. Tallon sur les répercussions du projet de ce territoire,' 25 February 1944.
[125] ADBDR 76 W 128 Architecte départemental des monuments historiques, 'Projet de submission partielle de la Camargue et de la vallée des Baux,' 25 February 1944.
[126] ADBDR 76 W 128 E. Freiherr von Spielgel, Consul Général d'Allemagne, Marseille to J. F. Bussière, Préfet Régional de la Région de Marseille, 11 March 1944
[127] ADBDR 76 W 128 Sous-Préfect de l'Arrondissement d'Arles to Préfet des Bouches-du-Rhône, 'Submersions dans la région d'Arles,' 22 February 1944; ADBDR 76 W 128 G. Moyen, Cabinet du Préfet de la région de Marseille, 22 February 1944.
[128] ADBDR 76 W 128, Tivolle, Inspecteur Général de la Production Industrielle, Fleury, Ingénieur en Chef des Industries Chimiques, Bureau, Ingénieur en chef des Mines, 'Note urgente

An agricultural engineer outlined the dire consequences for agriculture in the region. If the Camargue's water levels were artificially maintained at winter levels, it would be impossible to cultivate crops and vines, salt levels would rise and sterilize the soil, swamps would turn into *étangs* meaning that they would cease to support cattle grazing, and rice production would be unharvestable. Furthermore, the engineer predicted that the Camargue risked seeing outbreaks of 'malaria' due to the increased number of *étangs*. Meanwhile, in the Vallée des Baux, the 20,000,000 francs that the Vichy regime had recently invested in local agriculture would be effectively wiped out. [129] The police also feared that Saliers internment camp would be flooded, necessitating the evacuation of its inmates to Gurs.[130]

These fears and concerns seem to have had little influence on the German authorities, suggesting that defensive considerations overrode all others. From 1 March 1944 onwards, all functioning pumping stations were in action, pumping water from the Rhône. Moreover, German units based at Saintes-Maries-de-la Mer and Salin-de-Giraud took advantage of south easterly winds to open gates on the sea dyke, thereby allowing sea water to flow into the Vaccarès. These actions, reported a Génie Rural engineer, threatened to wreck agricultural interests by the massive upsurge in salt water and submerge the salt pans at Salin-de-Giraud. [131] It then seems that the German authorities bowed to French protests, as they

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sur les répercussions probables de l'inondation de la Camargue et de la Vallée des Baux.' 21 February 1944.

[129] ADBDR 76 W 128 Ingénieur en chef du Génie Rural, Marseille, 'Rapport,' 22 February 1944.

[130] ADBDR 76 W 128 Intendant régional de Police to Préfet régional de Marseille, 'Inondation de la Camargue,' 6 March 1944.

[131] Ingénieur du Génie Rural to Directeur Général du Génie Rural.

allowed dyke gates to be opened when the northerly *mistral* was blowing in order to lower the level of the Vaccarès. [132]

Yet by 20 March 1944 the situation was precarious. Due to the pumping from the Rhône, water levels in the marshes and fields of the upper Camargue had reached the flood levels of winter 1943-1944, necessitating the removal of livestock and threatening agriculture. In the Basse-Camargue, the situation was – for the moment – less alarming, due to fewer pumping stations and the high water absorption rates of sandy terrain near Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer. However, if the level of the Vaccarès rose any further the sea dyke ran the risk of being overwhelmed. [133] The local Génie Rural engineer urged the Under-Prefect of Arles to advise German authorities that water levels had already reached those of winter 1943-1944 (and in some cases had gone beyond them). [134] As these reports indicate, the destruction of the Camargue's physical environment seemed imminent.

Nature's resilience

Throughout the Camargue's wartime history, nature was not a passive actor. As indicated, the wetlands' harsh environment disrupted Vichy's plans to "re-educate" Roma inmates at Saliers. Furthermore, before the implementation of the submersion scheme, nature had offered some resistance to the German troops. For instance, soldiers stationed in the Camargue supplemented their diets with

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[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] ADBDR 76 W 128 J. Arrighi de Casanova, Ingénieur du Génie Rural to Sous-Préfet de l'Arrondissement d'Arles, 22 March 1944.

local fauna and *gardiens* recall how soldiers helped themselves to cattle. [135] But German troops were, at times, apparently thwarted by the Camargue's singular environment. Monica Krippner records the memories of one *gardien*:

> During the war, *madame* – let me see, it was during the occupation – some German officers mounted on Austrian horses, there were sixteen of them, rode into the *étang*, for you know the water is shallow, and on to one of the islands of the Vaccarès. They were hunting our *sanglier* [boar], and we saw them go and said nothing for we knew about the quicksands, and we knew that their foreign horses had no understanding of our terrain, for a Camargue horse would never get caught by a quicksand. Sure enough they disappeared – but completely, sixteen horses and men. But who are we to mourn the *Boche*? We guess that they must have reached the island, sighted their wild boar, and given chase, and thus they all went into the *sables mouvements*. With sixteen horses and men fighting like crazed ones for their life it must have been all over very quickly but not quickly enough to have prevented a terrible death. [136]

Even if allowing for an element of exaggeration, this story nonetheless suggests the ways in which nature unwittingly opposed the occupying forces, much to the apparent pride of the locals.

Moreover, on a larger scale, nature combined with material shortages to undermine the plans to flood the Camargue. Pumping stations lacked lubricant and fuel. In all, over eight tons of coal, 450 litres of gas-oil, and twenty five litres of oil were needed daily. As a consequence of these shortages, many pumps remained inactive. [137] On 18 March 1944, the local Ponts et Chaussées engineer reported that the 'situation was not serious,' because no cultivatable terrain lay

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[135] Marcel and Jean Raynaud and René Lanbert, quoted in Chevalier, *Bois des Rièges*, 101, 125.
[136] Quoted in Krippner, *Discovering the Camargue*, 63.
[137] ADBDR 76 W 128 Caillol, Ingénieur des Ponts et Chaussées de l' Arrondissement d'Arles, 'Rapport: inondation de la région d'Arles et du Sud-Est du département du Gard, 18 March 1944, 1.

under water and that the 'situation currently remains acceptable for French interests.' [138] On 7 April 1944, the Head Engineer of Génie Rural noted that due to the strong *mistral* wind (that had blown across the Camargue since the end of March) and the poor functioning of pumping stations, the 'situation was no longer of an alarming character.' [139] By 10 May 1944 the 'drying action' of the *mistral* (and the poor performance of the pumping stations) meant that the extent of flooding had not changed since the beginning of April. [140]

This situation continued to the end of May 1944, when the local Ponts et Chausées engineer noted that there was 'nothing particular to signal' as the water levels in the *étangs* were as 'low as possible'and the Saliers, Grand Mer, and Pont de Rousty marshes were '*constantly retreating.*' This was despite the extra fuel German authorities had secured for the pumping stations, as the current hot weather meant that there was an 'intense evaporation.' [141] It appears that German military authorities became frustrated by their inability to flood the Camargue and took further action to provoke its submersion. In June they blocked drainage canals between the Pont de Rousty and Grand Mer marshes and the Vaccarès in order to compartmentalise the Camargue's water levels according to altitude. This, they hoped, would cause flooding in higher areas to spill over into the Basse-Camargue. [142] Yet these measures had 'no effect' because of the extreme heat, dryness, and evaporation, although officials feared that the situation might

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[138] Ibid. 2.
[139] ADBDR 76 W 128 Reynaud, Ingénieur en chef du Génie Rural to Préfet of Bouches-du-Rhône, 7 April 1944.
[140] ADBDR 76 W 128 Arrighi de Casanova, Ingénieur du Génie Rural, 'Situation au 10 mai 1944 des inondations stratégiques provoquées par les autorités militaires allemandes dans la région arlesienne.'
[141] Emphasis in original. ADBDR 76 W 128 Caillol, Ingénieur des Ponts et Chaussées de l'Arrondissement d'Arles, 'Rapport,' 30 May 1944.
[142] ADBDR 76 W 128 Caillol, Ingénieur des Ponts et Chaussées de l'Arrondissement d'Arles, 'Rapport,' 20 June 1944

change in the event of heavy rain. [143] The evidence suggests, therefore, that the Camargue successfully resisted the submersion measures, thanks in no small part to the drying influence of the winds and sun that the region was so prone to, as well as the earlier lack of fuel.

Therefore, despite the pressures from agricultural intensification, aerial testing zones, and defensive flooding, the Camargue emerged surprisingly unscathed from the conflict, with Bressou arguing that the 'war has passed over the Camargue reserve without damaging it too much.' [144] Visitors to the Camargue in the postwar era also reported little change. In 1947 British naturalist G. K. Yeates reported for *Country Life* that 'to the physical appearance of the Camargue ten years have brought no change, despite the war and the occupation of the area by French, German, and Allied troops in turn.' The danger of mines, however, was more apparent, and 'the fact that the locals scorn the ideas of mines does not impress the foreign visitor as much as the casualty records in the hospital at Arles.' On the whole, according to Yeates, the 'greater part of Camargue is as untouched as it was before'; any changes to bird populations had more to do with natural conditions, such as drought, than the war. [145] Yeates gave a similar impression to readers of *The Ibis* a year later, stating clearly that the 'war has left few scars on the Camargue,' even if it was 'decidedly unhealthy and dangerous' in some areas to bird-watch because of the landmines [146] (the removal of landmines across France is covered in chapter six).

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[143] See ADBDR 76 W 128 Caillol, Ingénieur des Ponts et Chaussées de l'Arrondissement d'Arles, 'Rapport,' 4 July 1944; Caillol, Ingénieur des Ponts et Chaussées de l' Arrondissement d'Arles, 'Rapport,' 31 July 1944; and ADBDR 188 W 19 Ingénieur en chef du Génie Rural to Préfet des Bouches-du-Rhône, 'Situation au 25 juin 1944 des inondations stratégiques provoquées par les autorités allemandes dans la région arlesienne,' 30 June 1944.

[144] Bressou, 'Actes de la Réserve zoologique et botanique,' No. 25, 46.

[145] G. K. Yeates 'The Camargue Re-visited' *Country Life*, 5 September 1947, 474.

[146] G. K. Yeates, 'Some supplementary notes on the birds of the Rhône delta' *The Ibis* 90 (July 1948), 426. A 1977 birdwatching guide to the Camargue presented a similar view; 'with the

In a similar vein, Etienne Gallet's 1949 guide to the Camargue's flamingos made little mention of the war's influence on the Camargue (bar disruption to the flamingos' nesting in 1944 due to increased aviation activity). Gallet described the Camargue, a mysterious 'desert of salt,' in a way that would not have been out of place in pre-war descriptions of the wetlands. For Gallet, this landscape had a 'special charm' where 'legend and history merged together' especially in those places where nature had been left to itself and 'man [sic] had not yet introduced his miserable civilisation.' [147]

Such views continued into the 1960s. Krippner argued that in the Camargue people lived according to a 'time-table regulated by the sun and the seasons' with few of the trappings of modern life. Tourists that visited the Camargue supposedly felt a strong connection with the landscape, which Krippner attributed to the fact that 'many are experiencing real freedom for the first times in their lives and others are recapturing it, and all recognize something of value that they have almost lost or never really had.' [148] Similarly, for naturalists Jacques Blondel and Luc Hoffmann writing just before the establishment of the Parc naturel regional de Camargue in 1970, the Camargue was a 'wild, mysterious [and] sometimes hostile land' which until recently had 'remained almost totally free from modern developments.' Steppes and marshes were 'in their primitive state' and this 'virgin and savage Nature' offered the

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return of peace in the summer of 1945, there were still few apparent changes to either scenery or way of life.' M. Shepherd, *Let's look at the Camargue: An 'Ornitholidays' Guide* (Bognor Regis: "Ornitholidays" 1977), 21.

[147] Gallent, *Les flamants roses de Camargue*, 11-12, 124.

[148] Krippner, *Discovering the Camargue*, 156-7.

possibility for 'physical and moral regeneration of which modern man [sic] has more and more need.' [149]

These comments suggest that for certain observers the Camargue continued to act as a refuge of tradition from the modern world, despite the extensive human transformations that created the wetlands and its turbulent wartime environmental history. The very fact that the wetlands could still be celebrated and portrayed as a wild area, suggests that due to the immense efforts of the SNAF and the role of nature itself, the Camargue survived the potentially devastating ecological effects of modern warfare. Bar a memorial to the Saliers camp (inaugurated in February 2006) and remains of German bunkers and other defences on the shoreline (see chapter seven), no physical traces of the war exist in the contemporary *camarguais* landscape.

However, many features of the Camargue's wartime history reappeared in the postwar period, such as plans to modernise and intensify agriculture in the region and drain the Camargue. [150] Therefore, approximately ten years after Vichy modernisers proposed draining the Camargue, Ponts et Chaussées officials had to issue reminders that 'the interests of the Camargue's zoological and botanical reserve demand a sufficient level of water in the *étangs*.' [151] Furthermore, in 1960, Krippner reported that high speed fighter jets flying over

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[149] Alexander Library, Zoology Library, University of Oxford, France Box 1938-1952, Jacques Blondel and Luc Hoffman, 'L'originalité et le rôle de la réserve de Camargue', prepared for *Bulletin des Réserves Naturelles et Ornithologiques de Belgique* [n.d. late 1960s?], 14, 16-7, 23. In this piece, Hoffmann seemingly contradicts his earlier description of the Camargue in 'An Ecological Sketch of the Camrgue,' in which he placed greater emphasis on human transformation of the landscape.

[150] See Blondel and Hoffman, 'Originalité et le rôle de la réserve de Camargue,' 14.

[151] ADBDR 188 W 21 Dayre, Ingénieur des T.P.E., Ponts de Chaussées, département des Bouches-du-Rhône, Service de Navigation Rhône-Saône, 'Rapport de Subdivisionnaire,' 8 August 1952.

the reserve disrupted bird life, especially when they broke the sound barrier. A petition was apparently sent in protest to the French government. [152]

These comments from the 1950s and 1960s indicate that the wartime history of the Camargue cannot be viewed in isolation, and needs to be seen within the larger context of twentieth-century French environmental history. Similarly, the history of mountains during the "dark years" cannot be divorced from wider notions concerning mountainous landscapes.

[152] Krippner, *Discovering the Camargue*, 61.

Chapter Five

Mobilising Mountains in Vichy France

On 25 October 1941 Marc Augier addressed a gathering of the 'Jeunesse de l'Europe Nouvelle,' the youth section of the Groupe Collaboration. [1] Augier had been involved with secular youth hostelling groups in interwar France and would go on to edit *Le Combattant Européen,* the newspaper of the Anti-Bolshevik Legion, and become political officer of the French Charlemagne division of Waffen-SS. On that 1941 day in October he focused on his recent ascent of Mont Blanc. [2] Upon reaching the summit on a glorious autumn day and arriving at 'the most tranquil place in Europe', he felt liberated from the mundane daily experiences of newspapers, gendarmes, and ration coupons, as well as the 'joys of the National Revolution, collaborationists' arguments, and those of the anglophiles.' [3]

Yet despite this welcome respite from the annoyances of Vichy France, Augier was not tempted to stay at this secluded spot. After all, it was not possible for

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[1] The Jeunesse de l'Europe Nouvelle was created in May 1941 by Marc Augier and Jacques Schweizer (who later became its leader). Much of its membership was drawn from student circles and at its peak in 1943 it had 4,000 members. It was less moderate than its parent organisation, Groupe Collaboration, which, according to Bertram Gordon, 'carried the most social and intellectual prestige' of collaborationist movements. See *Collaborationism in France during the Second World War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1980), 233-8.

[2] Augier had written about his mountaineering expeditions in the Swiss Alps and skiing trips in Norway in the journal of the Centre Laïc des Auberges de Jeunesse during the interwar period. Ibid. 255-7.

[3] Wiener Library, London, Microfiche 117/ F652, Marc Augier, 'Les jeunes devant l'aventure européenne,' 25 October 1941, 6.

an individual to remain alone on the summit. The mountain was too dangerous, too demanding, and too difficult an environment in which to survive. This was one of the lessons Augier drew from the mountain; 'man [sic] is not made for solitude, the mountain tells him to live communally' (*la montagne lui fixe la règle commune*). The 'solitary alpinist' resembled the 'bourgeois and capitalist Europe of the nineteenth century... [that] lived by a false philosophy [and] followed a negative social order where the religion of individualism replaced the rules of the community.' This misguided individualism had led to war in 1914, the kind of war that would only cease to exist once 'men' learnt to live by the 'law of the [climbing] rope.' The mountain also taught Augier two other important lessons. These were to see the big picture (as from the summit) and that the only way to achieve real joy (similar to that felt by the climber upon reaching the summit after an arduous ascent) was through extreme effort and self-sacrifice. According to Augier, the 'complete sacrifice of oneself' was the only philosophy 'really validated by life,' and one that the American people – who supposedly preferred the ease of the cable car to the sweat of the climb – failed to understand. For Augier, the mountain's lessons led to one bloody conclusion, namely, the united struggle and sacrifice of European men against the evil of communist Russia. [4] Augier and his collaborationist movement were not the only ones to draw on mountains for inspiration in wartime France. And, like Augier's rhetoric, other groups in Vichy France linked mountains to notions of masculinity, war, and male sacrifice.

Writing during the phoney war, J. Carcagne, editor in chief of the *Revue alpin* of Club Alpin Français' Lyon section suggested that France's mountains

[4] Ibid. 5-11, 15, 30.

would 'sleep' during the war, 'indifferent' to the 'divisions' (*déchirements*) that were tearing Europe apart. [5] This was not the case as France did not let its mountains 'sleep.' In this chapter, I argue that mountains mattered between 1940 and 1944 because they were mobilised by both Vichy and the resistance as a means of fulfilling their political, social, and military aims.

Mountains mattered in a variety of ways. For a start, they acted as a substitute for the battlefield. For Vichy and the Club Alpin Français (or CAF), they became a space in which to revitalise and strengthen the minds and bodies of French men in the wake of defeat. As a consequence, both Vichy and CAF promoted alpinism during the "dark years." [6] The links between masculinity and mountains were most fully realised through the creation of the Jeunesse et Montagne movement, under the auspices of the French air force. Jeunesse et Montagne brought 15,000 young men into the *haute montagne* as a substitute for military training and flying. However, through a case study of *maquisards* in the Vercors, I argue that resistance mythology, like Vichy, identified mountains as a way of rejuvenating masculinity. Although historians have paid attention to Vichy's promotion of alpinism and the convergences between the resistance and mountains, they have not considered the two themes in tandem. [7]

The *maquis'* presence in the Vercors represents a peak in the mobilisation of mountains during the war. In the face of German forces' numerical and

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[5] J. Carcagne, 'Pour la Patrie, dans la Montagne,' *Revue alpine*, 45th Year, No. 322, 1939, 74.

[6] Travers outlines in detail the ways in which Vichy's Commissariat général à l'Éducation générale et aux sports promoted alpinism and skiing in *Politique et représentations*. My focus here is on CAF.

[7] On Vichy and alpinism, see Michel Mestre, 'La Montagne et l'alpinisme: vecteurs de l'idéologie nationaliste dans les Etats alpins aux XIXe et XXe siècles (1850-1950),' PhD diss. University of Aix-en-Provence 1 (1989); Travers, *Politique et représentations*; and Idem. 'La montagne pervertie,' *L'Alpe* 19 (April-June 2003), 72-80. On the resistance and mountains, see Boulet, 'Montagne et résistance en 1943'; and Garrier, 'Montagnes en résistance,' 207-20.

technological superiority, *maquisards* transformed the Vercors into a "natural fortress," which they envisaged would act as a secure base in occupied France for Allied forces during the invasion of France. Ultimately, however, they allowed themselves to become over-confident about the level of security offered by the Vercors' rugged topography. The Vercors was an exceptional case of resistance and, as outlined in chapter seven, it has been transformed into one of the foremost symbols of French resistance to Nazi oppression. Nonetheless, it remains a useful case study for exploring the links forged between the resistance and France's mountains.

Both Vichy's and the resistance's mobilisation of mountains had material repercussions. Part of Jeunesse et Montagne's mission was to develop the mountain environment through "improvement works" (such as building new refuges), which formed one aspect of Vichy's war against "wasteland." Their activity was the only way for Vichy to physically reshape inaccessible mountain spaces and render them productive. Therefore, rocky crags and frozen glaciers were not spared Vichy's cultivation drive. Meanwhile, the resistance's mobilisation of the Vercors as a military base attracted German attacks, which led to material modification of the mountain landscape.

Although my focus in this chapter rests overwhelmingly on men and mountains, I do not wish to suggest that there was no female presence at high altitudes. [8] Women were part of the history of mountains in Vichy France; they lived, worked, and, supported resistance networks in mountainous regions, and some

[8] For an analysis of the relationship between gender and mountains, including female experiences and gendered representations of mountaineering, see Susan R. Schrepfer, *Nature's Altars: Mountains, Gender, and American Environmentalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005).

died as a consequence. My focus on masculinity is dictated by sources and the fact that it was men, rather than women, who Vichy and the resistance linked most explicitly to the mountains.

Military defeat, masculinity, and mountains

The natural environment is a site from which to approach the construction of gender identities during the "dark years," which is a perspective that the historiography of the period has so far overlooked. War, defeat, occupation, and the establishment of the Vichy regime challenged existing gender relations in France. Of course, gender relations are arguably repeatedly contested and rarely, if ever, exist in a state of tranquillity. [9] Nonetheless, it seems clear that the events of 1940 did mount a serious test for gender relations and identities. For a start, there were fewer men on French soil as approximately two million French men languished in German prisoner of war camps, separating them from their wives, families, jobs, and country.[10]

As part of its reactionary social programme, the Vichy regime introduced a series of policies designed to restore "traditional" gender roles based on the supposedly natural differences between men and women. Women were to be

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[9] As Michael Roper and John Tosh argue, masculine and feminine identities are 'not... distinct and separable constructs, but... parts of a political field whose relations are characterized by domination, subordination, collusion and resistance.' 'Introduction, Historians and the Politics of Masculinity,' in Michael Roper and John Tosh (eds.), *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1991), 8. And, as R.W. Connell suggests, masculinities 'come into existence at particular times and places and are always subject to change.' *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 185. See also Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

[10] See Fishman, *We Will Wait*.

maternal reproducers once again, and men strong producers. A series of reforms, such as the banning of abortion and revision of marriage legislation, targeted women's everyday lives and their bodies. This assertion of tightly defined gender roles was presented as part and parcel of France's restoration. [11]

Arguably, male identities entered a particularly turbulent time after 1940. In the spring and summer of that year, French men had apparently proved themselves incapable of defending their nation – and their wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters – from Nazi Germany, ushering in a view of French masculinity characterised by images of weakness and failure. [12] As Julian Jackson argues, observers viewed the defeat as "devirilising" France, and unfavourable comparisons were made between images of 'unhealthy and unmanly' French soldiers and apparently mighty German ones. [13] As a consequence, a component of Vichy's plans for the restoration of the French nation was the rejuvenation of masculinity. As Luc Capdevila suggests, the 'appeal to virility' permeated all aspects of French society after the defeat. [14]

Yet rebuilding masculinity was no easy task for the Vichy regime. One way for Vichy to recreate a "positive" image of strong French manhood might have been to glorify the role of the warrior and appeal to French male military pride. [15]

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[11] Most radically, the law of 15 February 1942 ushered in the death penalty for abortion. Cheryl A. Koos, 'On les aura!: The Gendered Politics of Abortion and the Alliance nationale contre la dépopulation, 1938-1944,' *Modern and Contemporary France* 7/1 (February 1999), 29. See also Diamond, *Women and the Second World War in France*; Muel-Dreyfus, *Vichy and the Eternal Feminine*; and Pollard, *Reign of Virtue*.

[12] Michael Kelly, 'The Reconstruction of Masculinity at the Liberation,' in H. R. Kedward and Nancy Wood (eds.), *The Liberation of France: Image and Event* (Oxford: Berg, 1995), 119.

[13] Jackson, *France: The Dark Years*, 328.

[14] Capdevila, 'The Quest for Masculinity,' 426-7.

[15] For an exploration of the relationship between the military and masculinity, see David H. J. Morgan, 'Theater of War: Combat, The Military, and Masculinities,' in Harry Broad and Michael Kaufman (eds.) *Theorizing Masculinities* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994), 165-82. George L. Mosse argues that the modern masculine stereotype (which centred on 'so-called manly virtues, such as will power, honor, and courage,') survived the horrors of the First World War, and was even

However, the humiliating circumstances of defeat, the terms of the armistice and the very presence of occupying forces made this an impossible route to follow. For the foreseeable future, French men would play no part on the battlefield and the French army was reduced to 100,000 lightly-armed, non-conscripted recruits, and conferred the sole role of maintaining internal order. [16] As a consequence, according to Capdevila, 'constructive work, rather than war was to be the keynote of the new man.' [17] In such a way, the renewal of masculinity was linked to a renewal of the body. [18]

Much of this "manly" work was to be carried out in the great outdoors, meaning that the environment became a site in which French men were to rebuild their masculinity. In chapters two and three, I outlined how working the land, either in fields or forests, was intended to rebuild male bodies, improve morality, and generate a sense of solidarity, as well as contribute to the material resurrection of France. Mountains also formed an important part of this process. Vichy mobilised them to instil patriotism and the values of effort and sacrifice into (predominantly young) French males, alongside other measures, such as re-writing the school

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strengthened by it. 'The ideals of courage, sacrifice, and camaraderie – indeed the image of the warrior himself – were not touched by... criticism of this war.' *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 4, 108-09.

[16] For the composition of the army under the terms of the armistice, see Christian Bachelier, 'L'armée française entre la victoire et la défaite,' in Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida (eds.), *La France des années noires. Tome 1: de la défaite à Vichy* (Paris: Seuil, 1993), 82-6. Bachelier describes the defeat as the 'worst disaster' in the history of the French army.'

[17] Capdevila also recognises that the 'armed volunteer' (hailing from all points along the collaboration-resistance spectrum) eventually became a key figure in the quest to rebuild masculinity. 'Quest for Masculinity in a Defeated France,' 428, 433.

[18] As Joan Tumblety suggests, for both Vichy and collaborationists, 'the failure of the defeat, as well as the promise of fascist renewal was articulated and focused on the body of the Frenchman himself.' See 'Revenge of the Fascist Knights: Masculine Identities in *Je suis partout*, 1940-1944,' *Modern and Contemporary France* 7/1 (February 1999), 17.

curriculum to teach masculine and feminine values to French boys and girls. [19] The rigours of mountain life were also intended to restore men physically. In such a way, mountains became a surrogate for the battlefield.

Vichy was hardly original when it mobilised mountains as a substitute for war and to test, strengthen, and affirm masculinity. During the first half of the twentieth century, American writers had suggested that alpinism and mountain climbing were alternatives to warfare, as the pursuit of these activities developed strong male bodies and provided a non-violent way for men to express their supposedly natural violent urges, as well as experience risk. [20] Vichy's linking of nationalism, men, and mountains had other precedents. Victorian climbers, for instance, linked the qualities required in mountaineers (such as resilience) with those of the successful English soldier. [21] Furthermore, according to George Mosse, in post-1918 Germany, mountain climbing was linked to 'individual and national regeneration through conquest and domination.' Conquering mountains supposedly created men that were 'patriotic, hard, simple and beautiful.' As a consequence, mountains were a means for men in Germany's weakened postwar condition to 'find battle in the midst of constant danger, struggle in close proximity to death, heroic deeds and hard-fought victories.' [22] And as Susan Schrepfer argues, by 1939, a common belief within US society held that 'the purpose of mountaineering was to prepare men for war.' [23]

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[19] Paxton, *Vichy France*, 160.
[20] Schrepfer, *Nature's Altars*, 139.
[21] Robert MacFarlane, *Mountains of the Mind: A History of a Fascination* (London: Granta Books, 2003), 90-1.
[22] Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 114-19.
[23] Schrepfer, *Nature's Altars*, 146.

Moreover, Vichy's mobilisation of mountains had a home-grown predecessor. Following French defeat during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871, the Club Alpin Français (CAF) emerged from alpinist and military circles (army officers were well represented in its ranks). CAF was intimately tied to patriotic sentiments and military values, and one of its aims was to create new soldiers through a focus on discipline, patriotism, and attention to physical health. [24] As Jean-Paul Bozonnet argues, CAF's aims and motto – 'For the homeland through the mountain' (*Pour la Patrie par la montagne*) – were ways of legitimating the marginal sport of alpinism and strengthening French nationalism after the humiliating loss of Alsace-Lorraine. [25]

CAF's aims dovetailed with those of Vichy and it became a key partner in the promotion of alpinism as a way of rebuilding French manhood. But before the establishment of the Vichy regime, CAF had proudly displayed its patriotic sentiments during the phoney war. As CAF president Léon Olivier told its members; 'profoundly attached during peacetime to our association's noble and proud motto, you are now exclusively in the service of our beloved country and you will serve her to the extreme limit of your forces, including injury and, if necessary, death, [in order to achieve] victory.' [26]

Through their experience and love of mountains, CAF members had supposedly become better soldiers. An article by G. Courtade in *La Montagne*, CAF's official journal, outlined in greater detail how alpinism had taught its

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[24] Mestre, 'Montagne et l'alpinisme,' 97-8.
[25] Jean-Paul Bozennet, *Des monts et des mythes: l'imaginaire social de la montagne* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1992), 168.
[26] Léon Olivier, 'Pour la Patrie par la Montagne,' *La Montagne: Revue du Club Alpin Français*, No. 310, October 1939, 225-6.

members the 'qualities and virtues that the state of war urgently demands of us.' Principally, the mountain had acted as a 'harsh and beneficial school. It has given us lessons of endurance and virility.' Having given up comfort, suffered hunger and thirst, and braved the elements, alpinists had not only improved their muscles but 'strengthened their souls.' And having freely faced death in the mountains, CAF's members would feel no fear in front of the Siegfried Line, nor would they struggle to manufacture a sense of solidarity with their fellow soldiers as 'co-operation has been one of our unwritten rules.' There were, however, differences between alpinism and fighting on the battlefield, Courtade continued. Unlike death in the mountains, death on the battlefield 'will have an infinite value and majesty. It will no longer be an "accident," but a "sacrifice." We will have died for our country and for justice.' Furthermore, Courtade reminded CAF's members that alpinism had bred a different kind of patriotism. For although alpinists didn't necessarily love their country more than other citizens, they 'seemed to love [France] more simply, more naively, more naturally, as if the mountain safeguarded a freshness of feeling.' [27]

It is hard to establish to what extent the values promoted by alpinism influenced conscripted mountaineers and instilled in them a more vivid love of their country. Some evidence, though, does exist. During the 1939-1940 conflict, CAF's Annecy Section produced a *Bulletin de Guerre* for its mobilised members, which presented itself in terms that would readily appeal to mountaineers; 'if you are at the head of the rope, we will strive to be good seconds, and this Bulletin will be the

[27] G. Courtade, 'Pour la Patrie par la Montagne,' *La Montagne: Revue du Club Alpin Français*, No. 311, November-December 1939, 258-60.

rope.' [28] The *Bulletin de Guerre* included space for messages to be passed on between mobilised soldiers and their families. However, when soldiers mentioned mountains, it was more often in relation to alpine sports or a love of mountains rather than the manly qualities and heady sense of nationalism outlined by Courtade.

For instance, one corporal asked his mother to send his boots and skis so he could enjoy the snow, whilst another had the good fortune to be able to see Mont Blanc when he woke up one morning, making his 'heart jump' and leading him to spend the 'rest of the morning in contemplation.' [29] Another was stationed at a 'record altitude for the French army' where his unit breathed the 'pure air of our mountains.' However, his comrades from Provence struggled with the cold; 'you can easily tell that they are not members of the Annecy Section of CAF.' [30] In the first two cases, it is unclear how an enjoyment of alpine sports and the contemplation of the mountain landscape would be useful in battle. And in the later case, alpinism may have enabled CAF's members to endure the cold, but it does not appear to have instilled a strong sense of solidarity with their fellow soldiers who were more accustomed to the warm Mediterranean climate.

Furthermore, rather than feel inspired to fight by their love of mountains, CAF members appear to have felt disgruntled at being separated from the snowy summits. 'What can we do in these barely undulating, immense [plains] in which we are stationed? The good weather only makes me miss Savoie and its mountains even more,' lamented one. [31] Another recruit complained how a recent snowfall made him

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[28] Section d'Annecy du Club Alpin Français, *Bulletin de Guerre*, No. 1, 30 October 1939, 1.
[29] Reignier, undated letter; and Jean Granier, undated letter, both quoted in ibid. 3-4.
[30] Raymond Real, undated letter, quoted in ibid. 3.
[31] Lucien Annchierri, letter dated 1 October 1939, quoted in ibid. 2.

'miss so much the ski slopes' of his 'beautiful Savoie,' while another was unimpressed with the low hills of Northern France where 'mud and cold' dominated rather than 'snow and mountains.' One lieutenant presumably summed up the mood for many when he wrote 'I greatly miss the mountains.' [32] Yet despite this discrepancy between CAF's rhetoric and reality on the ground, the organisation seized the opportunity to promote the associations between mountains and masculinity after the establishment of the Vichy regime.

CAF and the promotion of *alpinisme* in Vichy France

After the defeat, some alpinists were removed even further from their beloved mountains than members of the Annecy Section had been during the phoney war. For those that languished in German prisoner of war camps, alpinism seems to have offered moral support. In November 1940, CAF members imprisoned in Oflag XVIIA created a CAF unit to 'maintain intact the feelings of moral and spiritual elevation acquired in the mountain atmosphere.' The group's activities included seminars at the 'Université du Camp' and showing films on alpinism. [33] A similar group existed at Oflag VI A, where, according to an article in *La Montagne*, the 'love of the mountain [was] a precious comfort for prisoners of war.' This group's members created an exhibition in their barracks featuring a recreated panorama of Mont Blanc, a reconstruction of a mountain refuge, and a 'model cable car that

[32] André Chappaz, letter dated 29 October 1939; Authossierre, letter dated 29 October 1939; and Edmond Charbonnier, letter dated 8 October 1939, all quoted in ibid. 2-4.
[33] By September 1942 the group had 60 members. See *La Montagne: Revue du Club Alpin Français*, No. 324, January-March 1943, 17.

functioned in the middle of the room.' For *La Montagne*, this exhibition was more than 'an intellectual distraction for those alpinists temporally separated from their country and mountains' as recalling France's mountains fostered a sense of patriotism. [34]

The somewhat touching image of CAF members expressing their love of mountains and France through an exhibition in a German prisoner of war camp illustrates one of the ways in which alpinism, nationalism, and warfare interacted after the defeat. Back in France, CAF, and more generally the Vichy regime, adapted the convergences between mountains, patriotism, and the body as a means of restoring the men of defeated France. In fact, as Alice Travers argues, a consensus existed within Vichy France that viewed the discovery of mountains through alpinism as a vital part of the physical, moral, spiritual, and intellectual education of the young. [35]

Just as Vichy's interests converged with those of foresters (which had led to the introduction of reforestation legislation), so too did it introduce policies that were undoubtedly welcomed by CAF. In 1940, Vichy introduced a law to encourage ski instruction in schools, opened an École Supérieure de Ski et Alpinisme in Chamonix in 1941, and the year after, its General Commissariat for Physical

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[34] J. Fourcy, 'Nos prisonniers à l'Oflag VI A,' *La Montagne: Revue du Club Alpin Français*, No. 327, October-December 1943, 64. Similarly, some French winegrowers in German prisoner of war camps planned wine parties and wrote books about wine to keep their spirits up. For one of them, French wines 'were like a tree we could hang onto. A tree whose roots were deeply anchored in the soil of our country and whose branches spread throughout the world.' See Kladstrup and Kladstrup, *Wine and War*, 174-89.

[35] Travers, 'Montagne pervertie,' 75.

Education and Sport identified alpinism as 'a moral education as much personal as collective.' [36]

Perhaps as an ideological gesture or a ploy to improve its institutional standing at a time when it was threatened with incorporation into the newly formed Fédération française de la Montagne, CAF integrated itself into the "National Revolution" and paid homage to Pétain. This took the form of naming mountains after the head of state; CAF members proudly recounted their ascension of the northern summit of Aiguille de Blaitière, which had recently been renamed as Aiguille de Maréchal Pétain. [37] The dovetailing of interests between Vichy and CAF was literally cemented when the Pyrénées-Orientales section of CAF erected a 'commemorative cairn' in honour of Pétain in the Canigou Massif. This cairn, which was placed at an altitude of 2,784 metres on 7 August 1941, represented a way for CAF (an organisation which 'from the first day had never ceased to show Pétain its respect and faith in his work of national recovery' according to *La Montagne*) to pay homage to the head of state. [38]

However, the unpredictable mountain climate disrupted proceedings. On the first attempt to inaugurate the cairn, bad weather prevented CAF from applying the finishing touches and delayed the accompanying ceremony. It was not until 28 August 1941 that the cairn was completed and the following speech delivered by Monsieur Delfau, the local CAF president:

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[36] See Garrier, 'Montagnes en résistance,' 210; Travers, 'Montagne pervertie,' 72; and Idem. *Politique et représentations*, 151-7.
[37] Camille Claret-Tournier with Jean Mignon, 'Ascension de l'arête Nord Ouest de l'Aiguille du Maréchal Pétain (Aiguille de Blaitière) (Sommet-Nord) les 28 et 29 août,' *La Montagne: Revue du Club Alpin Français*, No. 320, January-March 1942, 20.
[38] 'Une pyramide Maréchal Pétain dans le massif du Canigou, Pardes, 7 août 1941,' *La Montagne: Revue du Club Alpin Français*, No. 320, January-March 1942, 21-2.

Chapter Five

> We have constructed [this cairn] by our own hands, with the stones of our mountains. We have secured these stones with the ideal cement, made of our enthusiasm, our faith, our patriotic fervour, as well as our gratitude (*reconnaissance*). We call upon the *tramontane* wind and Canigou's eagles to watch over this cairn. The *tramontane*, because it is the cleansing wind that blows away the impurities of the plain [and] the Canigou's eagles, because they are the incontestable kings of this solitary realm... They, and only they, are worthy of mounting a vigilant guard over this rustic monument which our respect (*piété*) has led us to dedicate to the nation's saviour. [39]

Recalling the Forestry Administration's involvement in the naming of an oak tree after Pétain in Tronçais forest (see chapter three), CAF used a simple yet highly symbolic means of linking its organisational aims with those of the state. Of course, the cairn may have been merely an opportunistic and relatively cost-effective way for CAF to ingratiate itself with the Vichy regime. But aside from political opportunism, it appears likely that CAF, informed by its long-standing patriotic viewpoint, genuinely believed that alpinism was a way of achieving the aims of the "National Revolution," namely, the rejuvenation of France.

After defeat, CAF promoted alpinism and being in the mountain environment as a means of rebuilding French masculinity. Paul Lauras, writing in *La Montagne*, identified 'softness [and] the loss of the notion of effort and of the higher sentiment of duty' as reasons for 'the worst defeat of [France's] history.' CAF, he continued, was ready to contribute to the 'resurrection (*relèvement*) of our nation and help to

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[39] Quoted in ibid. 21-2.

give an appetite for effort to the young generation who will be called upon to restore our country's *grandeur*.'[40]

CAF pointed to its history as evidence of its suitability to help with the important task of reconstructing masculinity. In *La Montagne*, Gabriel Bussillet recalled how CAF had been created in the 1870s with the aim of 'contributing to the *relèvement* of France by bringing young [boys] to the mountain to make them courageous and energetic men.' According to Bussillet, a similar movement was now needed following French defeat and so CAF would instruct France's young men to 'go to the mountains... with fervour.' In return, mountains would reward French youth with a 'vigorous body and a new soul.' CAF, Bussillet promised, would provide assistance to the young men so that 'from the summit we can contemplate together the vast horizons and from this grandiose spectacle will come confidence in ourselves and our country.' [41]

Local sections of CAF articulated a similar philosophy. In the Pyrenean region, Raymond Ritter argued that mountaineers were accustomed to defying danger, facing difficulties, and looking to the future. The mountain had already 'engraved... vigorous traits' in alpinists and 'taught [them] the virtue of sacrifice.' [42] Furthermore, Ritter argued that the mountains were a specifically male space. According to him, the mountain environment was physically too demanding for female bodies. For although mountains 'improved athletes' bodies' and

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[40] Paul Lauras, 'Alpinisme familial,' *La Montagne: Revue du Club Alpin Français*, No. 315, July-December 1940, 49-57.
[41] Gabriel Bussillet, 'L'oeuvre du Club Alpin,' *La Montagne: Revue du Club Alpin Français*, No. 319, October-December 1941, 66-8.
[42] Raymond Ritter, 'Pour la Patrie, par la Montagne,' *Bulletin Pyrénéen*, No. 235, 1940, 266.

'strengthened [the] souls' of men, Ritter could not see how they 'prepared mothers.'[43]

Women in Vichy France were supposed to be fertile, pure mothers, while men were to be energetic, virile leaders, and CAF identified the mountain as an ideal means with which to energise French men and make them leaders. An article by R. Latarjet in the Lyon Section of CAF's bulletin argued that 'our future duty is to arm future generations for an energetic life. With this aim, we possess one of the most marvellous means; the mountain.' For Latarjet, the mountain offered two things to young men. Firstly, a bond formed between the individual and the mountain, 'harmonizing' their 'spirits' and making the mountain 'the richest and most loyal of friends.' And secondly, the mountain was a 'place of individual and collective combat' where joy came from overcoming difficulties. Confronting the mountain's dangers also led to improved decision making capabilities. [44]

The mission that CAF conferred on mountains drew on long-standing notions. In his analysis of the social construction of mountains, Bozonnet identifies how they have been linked traditionally to the regeneration of body and soul and how ascending the mountain was viewed as a symbolic death of the old world leading to the resurrection of a 'new man.' The mountain acted as a testing ground for men; a successful ascent marked the climber out as worthy of being counted among '"real men," the heroes, and the elect.' In such a way, the mountain acted as a 'critical space.' [45]

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[43] Ibid. 272.
[44] R. Latarjet, 'La jeunesse devant la montagne,' *Revue Alpine*, 46th Year, No. 326, 1940, 30-4.
[45] Bozonnet, *Monts et mythes*, 37-9, 47.

Chapter Five

The connection between mountains and elitism is an important one. As Travers highlights, Vichy tapped into and reinforced existing notions that linked mountains with the elite of the nation, even if it did try to widen the appeal of skiing in schools. [46] The simple act of being in the mountains was supposed to instruct and elevate further France's future leaders. René Benjamin, Pétain's biographer and a writer with strong ruralist leanings, wrote approvingly of the mountain location of the Uriage school, which was created by Captain Pierre Dunoyer de Segonzac, a former cavalry officer, to produce France's future *cadres*. In Benjamin's sympathetic account of this cradle of French elitism, Uriage's students lived according to the 'sublime poet's notion' of 'moulding leaders high in the mountains... on a marvellous rock that towers above the valley.' For Benjamin, it was a 'moving notion to literally elevate someone who is to be perfected; to raise him, materially, to isolate him in the pure air, on the heights. It's more than symbolic. Things act strongly upon the spirit.' [47] However, the Uriage experience did not go entirely to plan for the regime, and Georges Lamirand, Vichy's first Secretary-General for Youth, blamed the school's remote, mountainous location as one of the reasons why Uriage's philosophy and activities became out of step with those of the regime (many of its pupils eventually joined the resistance). [48]

It is clear that CAF mobilised mountains to remake masculinity within Vichy's larger project of national renewal. However, articles extolling the value of mountain life in *La Montagne* and inaugurating cairns at 2,784 metres only reached

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[46] Travers, *Politique et représentations*, 207-11.
[47] Quoted in John Hellman, *The Knight-Monks of Vichy France: Uriage 1940-1945* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), 77.
[48] Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France*, 312. De Segonzac and his followers eventually joined the *maquis*.

a limited audience, and one that was already receptive to the alpinist ethos. This exclusivity reflected the fact that alpinism was a traditionally elitist sport in France and elsewhere. As Gilbert Garrier highlights, the paid holidays that French workers had enjoyed since 1936 were more likely to be spent by the sea or in the countryside than on inhospitable mountain slopes. [49] CAF did, however, attempt to broaden the appeal of alpinism in Vichy France, through such means as the promotion of Roger Frison-Roche's novel *Premier de cordée*.

In this 1943 novel, Frison-Roche, a former alpine guide and war reporter who became a prisoner of war before taking to the *maquis* in the Savoie, related an epic narrative focussing on the travails of Pierre Servettaz, a young man from a *savoyard* family of mountain guides. One fateful day, Pierre falls from a rock while trying to bring down his father's corpse after a terrible accident in the mountains. As a result of the fall, Pierre suffers from vertigo and turns to drink. In the end, however, he overcomes his fear and succeeds in climbing the north face of the exacting Aiguille Verte. This difficult climb restores Pierre's character. As he tells his uncle; 'vertigo, frozen feet, [and] risk were certainly all created to give us a taste for life... life must be continual fight. Woe to all those who don't fight!' [50] ***Premier de cordée*** is a tale of struggle, determination, and ultimate redemption, in which the mountains make, break, and remake men. [51] This portrayal of determination, effort, and moral and physical renewal in the testing mountain environment corresponded with CAF's promotion of alpinism in post-defeat France.

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[49] Garrier, 'Montagnes en résistance,' 210.
[50] Roger Frison-Roche, *Premier de cordée* (Grenoble and Paris: Arthaud, 1963 [1943]), 308-11.
[51] Capdevila wonders if this tale can be seen as a 'metaphor for national recovery' because it suggests that 'France will be re-born when masculinity has been re-forged.' 'Quest for Masculinity,' 427.

As a consequence, the organisation tapped into the popularity of *Premier de cordée* (which went on to sell over one million copies [52]) by helping to convert it into a film. Léon Olivier, CAF's president, unsurprisingly lavished praise on the cinematic version of Frison-Roche's epic tale (which was directed by Louis Daquin and released in January 1944):

> This film will once again stimulate... the grandeur of those feelings which the conquest of the summits inspires. It shows how the love of the mountains virilises young men's moral and physical forces, gives them a taste for risk (combined with reasonable prudence), and develops in everyone a team spirit which we call the spirit of the rope. [53]

Another article portrayed the filming itself as a feat of alpine ingenuity, meaning that over the course of the shoot, the film crew had learnt to become '*vrais montagnards*' (true mountain people). As a consequence, a 'large breath of pure [mountain] air' would blow through France's cinemas. [54]

Furthermore, government figures backed the film's message of determination and sacrifice (after all, Vichy's Commissariat général à l'Éducation générale et aux sport [CGEGS] had given the film financial and technical support). At a screening of *Premier de cordée* in February 1944, Jep Pascot, Vichy's General Commissioner for Sports, declared that although the regime did not 'want to turn all young French people into alpinists or mountain guides...it wants them all to acquire the love of disinterested effort and the practice of working as a team.' In addition, Pascot

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[52] Bozonnet provides this figure in *Des monts et des mythes*, 57.
[53] Quoted in 'Un grand film: "Premier de Cordée,' *La Montagne: Revue du Club Alpin Français*, No. 325, April-June 1943, 33.
[54] Philippe Gaussot, 'Pour tourner "Premier de Cordée" les opérateurs se sont faits varappeurs,' *Trait d'Union, Jeunesse Aérienne*, No. 7, September 1943.

continued, the young should follow the alpinist's lead in 'constantly trying to reach higher and higher summits.' [55] Other CGEGS publications lauded the film. and the organisation was undoubtedly heartened that Pétain himself attended a screening of the film.[56] These, however, were just isolated views of the film. and it is unclear whether or not *Premier de cordée's* more general audience (the film was a popular success) treated the film as a homily on the virtues of alpinism or as a welcome slice of escapism from the hardships of the Occupation.

Contemporary documentary films that glorified alpinism also met with critical and popular success. Most notably, Marcel Ichac's *À l'assaut des Aiguilles du Diable*, which documented well-respected alpine guide Armand Charlet's "assault" on challenging summits in the Mont Blanc range, won joint first prize at the Premier Congrès du Film Documentaire held in Paris in May 1943. [57] In addition, certain episodes of the commercially successful documentary series *La France en Marche* (produced by Marcel Pagnol's studio in Marseille) portrayed mountain themes (for instance, no. 34, "Les hommes de la neige" and no. 55 "En cordée"). [58] According to Louis Tixier-Vignancour, head of radio and cinema within Vichy's General Office for Information, *La France en marche* was designed to provide an alternative to German newsreels and relate 'important current issues and highlight the spiritual and material riches of the French nation while safeguarding its

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[55] Quoted in Travers, 'Montagne pervertie,' 75.
[56] Travers, *Politique et représentations*, 113-17.
[57] CACAN 1976009/1440 'Prix décernés par le Premier Congrès du Film Documentaire,' 6 May 1943. I am grateful to Brett Bowles for this reference.
[58] Brett Bowles, 'Newsreels, Ideology, and Public Opinion under Vichy: The Case of *La France en Marche*,' *French Historical Studies* 27/2 (Spring 2004), 430.

patrimony.'[59] Unsurprisingly, therefore, mountaineering was portrayed by *La France en marche* through the 'motif of regenerating the nation.' [60]

Watching a film or reading a book were not enough, however, to remake French masculinity on their own, and Jeunesse et Montagne, one of the many youth groups that flourished in Vichy France, took a more direct approach in its use of mountains as a substitute for the battlefield and aviation.

Jeunesse et Montagne

In 1942, a French army captain proudly related a recent mountaineering expedition he had led. Recalling Pétain's desire to maintain the virility of French soldiers, the captain felt justified in dragging his men up to the summits. After an ascent of 3,146 metres he proudly surveyed his men; 'Ah...the solid, muscular thighs of my soldiers! Beautiful bronzed arms emerging from shirt sleeves! Fine, sunburnt faces smiling through the sweat!' For the captain, this arduous ascent had brought physical and moral benefits; the 'mountain is one of the new ways to give the soldier a more virile soul, a better placed heart (*un coeur mieux placé*), and a more robust body.' [61] According to Rachel Woodward, geographical context is crucial for constructing and expressing masculine identities, and so forms a key part of military training. The natural environment becomes 'a challenging location against which the soldier-recruit is pitted, and in response to which skills and

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[59] Quoted in Ibid. 424.
[60] Ibid. 430.
[61] Capitaine G... du 150e R.I., 'Une Compagnie du 1503 R.I. en montagne,' *Bulletin Pyrénéen*, no. 239, 1942, 255-60.

identities of the soldier to be are constructed.' [62] This seems to have been the case for the jubilant captain and the French army in general.

As Paxton argues, the armistice army used 'mountain training... to exalt a man's spirit and develop tastes for risk, adventure, and teamwork.' [63] This included long, tough, bicycle rides in the Pyrenees and a march up Mont Dore in the Massif Central in inclement conditions. [64] The French Air Force also used the mountain to achieve similar aims through its youth movement, Jeunesse et Montagne (Youth and Mountain).

Created on 2 August 1940 by army officers from mountain units, such as Raymond Coche (a member, along with Roger Frison-Roche, of a 1935 expedition to the Hoggar range in southern Algeria) and the French air force, Jeunesse et Montagne aimed to deploy the mountain environment to transform its 15,000 recruits into a virile elite dedicated to the resurrection of France. [65] It came initially under the command of Captain Jacques Faure (who had led the French military's skiing team at the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games). In many ways Jeunesse et Montagne was similar to other Vichy-approved youth groups, as it sought to regiment and revitalise young men, and indoctrinate them with a strong sense of

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[62] Rachel Woodward, 'Locating Military Masculinities: Space, Place, and the Formation of Gender Identity in the British Army,' in Paul R. Higate (ed.), *Military Masculinities: Identity and the State* (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 2003), 44-7.
[63] Paxton, *Parades and Politics*, 55.
[64] Ibid. 52, 54.
[65] This figure comes from Mestre, 'La Montagne et alpinisme' 304. After the war, former Jeunesse et Montagne recruits reformed the association, which exists to this day, organising veterans meetings, mountain walks, and skiing *stages*, among other activities. See 'Epilogue et Re-naissance,' Jeunesse et Montagne website, http://www.jeunesse-et-montagne.org/apres_guerre/aujourd'hui.htm, consulted 22 August 2006.

honour, duty, discipline, and a respect for hierarchy (it was effectively a sister organisation of the Chantiers de la Jeunesse).[66]

Yet there were key differences. In particular, Jeunesse et Montagne had a relatively small membership compared with other youth movements in Vichy France.[67] It was harder to become part of Jeunesse et Montagne than Chantiers de la Jeunesse (draftees had to be physically fitter) and such exclusivity appears to have been part of the appeal for the organisation's leadership. In the words of Maurice Bongard, *chef* of the Pyrenean "Vignemale" *groupement*, Jeunesse et Montagne would create an 'elite of strong and daring men' who would give themselves 'joyfully and entirely to the cause of national resurrection.'[68] Once again in Vichy France, mountains were associated with elitism. Another key difference was Jeunesse et Montagne's emphasis on altitudes, as the mountains became a training ground in which to make new men, as well as a substitute for the skies. As Coche informed recruits in August 1940, Jeunesse et Montagne would be a 'tough and simple means to keep intact, even improve, each day your souls and your bodies and preserve whole the flame of youth that has irresistibly attracted you towards the skies.'[69] The training and activities that its recruits were to receive reinforced the

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[66] Halls, *Youth of Vichy France*, 133-5. Jeunesse et Montagne does not feature in Halls' work on Vichy youth movements.
[67] For instance, Compagnons de France had 33,000 members and the Association catholique de la jeunesse française boasted 2,300,000 members. Ibid. 148.
[68] Maurice Bongard, 'Qu'est-ce que "Jeunesse et Montagne?"' *Bulletin Pyrénéen*, No. 237, 1941, 64.
[69] Raymond Coche, 'Appel aux jeunes se destinant à l'aviation,' Jeunesse et Montagne website, http://www.jeunesse-et-montagne.org/creation/appel.htm, consulted 22 August 2006.

emphasis on altitude; Alpine sports, aeronautical activities (such as repairing gliders), and work devoted to developing mountain territory. [70]

Jeunesse et Montagne provided its select recruits (aged between eighteen and twenty) with a *stage* in high altitude chalets in the Alps and Pyrenees. For these recruits, alpinism was to be the 'hard and beautiful school of man.' [71] Their motto, 'Faire Face' ('Stand Up To') was designed to encapsulate the values of tenacity and fortitude that the mountain fostered. For Bongard, the mountain was a 'tough school' in which to 'complete the physical, moral, and civic education of a selection of young French men.' There was 'hardly any other means that could compare' with the mountain in this task of creating new men. Physically, the sheer effort of living at high altitude would serve to 'develop muscles,' the 'pure air' was to 'invigorate the blood,' and the toughness of life was designed to 'strengthen the body and harden it against fatigue, cold, and pain.' Morally, the mountain would push the young men to 'constantly surpass themselves' and make them 'love risk and effort.' And socially, mountain life mitigated against individualism, obliging Jeunesse et Montagne recruits to 'live as a team, march in line, and climb in roped teams.' This training was complemented by skiing in the winter and alpinism in the summer, along with the Hébert method adapted for mountain life. [72] The emphasis on

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[70] CHAN AJ [39] 143 Général de la Porte du Theil, 'Instruction fixant les modalités du fonctionnement du Commissariat et des Groupements de Jeunesse et Montagne dans le cadre du commissariat Général des Chantiers de la Jeunesse' 13 September 1943, 3.
[71] ADBDR 46 W 4 [n.a.] Jeunesse et Montagne leaflet [n.d.].
[72] Bongard, 'Qu'est-ce que "Jeunesse et Montagne?"' 61. "Hébertisme" was developed in 1906, by Lieutenant Hébert of the French army. Ten basic forms of exercise made up a session of Hébertisme: climbing, walking, lifting, running, swimming, jumping, crawling, balancing, throwing, and self-defence. See Halls, *Youth of Vichy France*, 199.

collective life among the peaks was intended to break down the class barriers between the recruits and teach them to 'get to know, respect, and help each other.' [73]

The physical transformation of male bodies in the mountains was a central component of the Jeunesse et Montagne philosophy. According to the organisation's medical service, the mountain climate and high altitude improved respiration, circulation, and metabolism, as well as increasing appetites and destroying almost all types of air-born germs. Furthermore, skiing developed muscles, coordination, and respiration (cross country skiing was preferred to the downhill version as the latter strained muscles whereas the former steadily increased muscle strength and fitness), while alpinism had an even more beneficial effect on the body as it reportedly developed 'equilibration, muscle tone, and heightened senses, particularly that of touch.' After a *stage* of six to eight months, it was predicted that a Jeunesse et Montagne recruit would gain four to six kilos in weight, demonstrate heightened reflexes and decision making capabilities, and enjoy a greater vital capacity. As an aesthetic benefit, brown skin pigmentation would 'happily replace the "corpse-like" white skin of new arrivals.' [74]

More generally, the Chantiers de la Jeunesse boasted of the physical improvements of its members, such as weak morbidity rates (just over one percent per 1,000 men per day) and weight gain in seventy-two percent of its recruits. [75]

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[73] ADI 21 J 9 [n.a.] 'Groupements Jeunesse et Montagne, Groupement Savoie, Challes les Eaux [n.d.].
[74] Le Service de Santé, 'Santé et Montagne,' *Groupements Jeunesse et Montagne: Bulletin des Chefs*, No. 28, July 1943, 55-8.
[75] CHAN AJ [39] 1 [n.a.] 'Contribution à la chronologie des Chantiers de jeunesse,' [n. d.].

That living in nature without comfort, taking cold showers, and going bare-chested led to a 'hardening of the body' was taken as being almost self-evident. [76]

In addition to becoming bronzed, stronger, and more dynamic, alpinism would allow the young men to gain better self-knowledge of their own bodies. As Charles Roiron, Jeunesse et Montagne's head of sporting activities, informed its unit leaders, every physical movement was crucial in the mountains and the alpinist needed to be acutely aware of his own weight and exert complete control over his muscles. According to Roiron, 'because it forces us to be aware of each one of our muscles, the mountain makes us rediscover ourselves (*retrouver nous-mêmes*). It is the best remedy for the malaise of modern man, which the experts rightly attribute to man's ignorance of his body.' [77]

The manual labour that Jeunesse et Montagne conducted was also designed to contribute to the physical and moral renewal of the young men, as well as being one of the foundations of France's national recovery. [78] In line with the National Revolution's propaganda, work was represented as a unifying activity and instructions were directed at Jeunesse et Montagne's *chefs de groupement* to use it to unite the factory workers, peasants and students that made up their teams. [79] The type of work was diverse, and included timber felling on vertiginous mountain slopes, an 'arduous and often dangerous' activity. [80] The logging sites assigned to Jeunesse et Montagne were frequently located 'high up on abrupt slopes' where the

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[76] CHAN AJ [39] 1 État-major du Général de la Porte du Theil, 'Règlement des groupements de Jeunesse,' [n.d.], 4.
[77] Charles Roiron, 'Notre école: la montagne, à un chef d'équipe,' *Groupements Jeunesse et Montagne: Bulletin des Chefs*, No. 22, 15 March 1943, 33.
[78] See C. R. 'Le travail,' *Trait d'Union, édition spéciale de la jeunesse aérienne*, No. 2, April 1943.
[79] Roiron, 'Notre école: la montagne, 32.
[80] 'Coupes de bois: Jeunesse et Montagne,' *Trait d'Union, édition spéciale de la Jeunesse aérienne*, No. 4, June 1943.

evacuation of wood was 'often acrobatic.' Despite its dangers and difficulties, the mountain-based lumberjacks were reported to enjoy forestry work as they could learn new skills, share their experience with their comrades, learn about the forest ('a seductive and somewhat mysterious universe'), and develop their physical strength. [81]

In particular, Jeunesse et Montagne work units were to devote themselves to developing tourist facilities in the 'high massifs' and the 'exploitation (*mise en valeur*) of the mountain.' [82] This development of mountain space included building refuges and chalets, maintaining mountain pastures, and restoring paths and was part of a wider programme to develop mountains to encourage tourism, skiing, and alpinism and so bring the benefits of these activities to the wider population and augment France's international prestige. [83] Within the context of Vichy's drive to cultivate and exploit as much as possible of France's territory (see chapter two), Jeunesse et Montagne's work seems to have represented the most practical and achievable way of domesticating and valorising high-altitude mountain territory.

Despite the hard reality of manual labour in the mountains, at least one commentator within the Jeunesse et Montagne movement held a romantic view of mountain life. In a 1943 article entitled 'Pourquoi la montagne?' ('Why the mountain?'), André Montagnier suggested that with France's aviators deprived of their aeroplanes the mountain could now offer them the silence, adventure, and dreams that they once found in the skies. In Jeunesse et Montagne, the 'man of the air' and the 'man of the mountain' were united and communed 'in their same desire

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[81] Ibid.
[82] ADBDR 46 W 4 [n.a.] Jeunesse et Montagne leaflet [n.d.].
[83] Travers, *Politique et représentations*, 79-94.

for the infinite' and the need to discover 'unknown and unexplored domains.' With their eyes turned towards the skies, the "men of altitude" felt different to those of the cities and plains and experienced a sense of 'suffocation' when they descended from the heights. But for Montagnier, the mountain was not just a temporary means of satisfying the need for altitude but was a 'school of energy, endurance, and camaraderie,' ideally suited to forming the pilots of tomorrow. But in the short term, the young men of Jeunesse et Montagne groups nestling in 'lost corners of the Haute-Savoie' had left behind the 'obscure towns, their grey offices, their everyday worries, and their classes and divisions' to live 'in contemplation' and discover 'the sense of authentic life.' [84] As this article shows, the mountain was represented as a space of adventure, discovery, and realness, a world away from the stifling and mundane valleys and cities, even if it was only a temporary alternative to the skies.

Some within the movement, however, tried to downplay the romantic aspects of mountain life. In the face of criticism that Jeunesse et Montagne offered a means for its recruits to escape the hardships of life in wartime France, providing them instead with the opportunity to practice alpine sports and experience a form of romanticised adventure among the summits, the organisation was keen to highlight that life in the mountains was not a 'refuge for cowards' but a 'test.' In an article entitled 'Notre école: la montagne' ('Our school: the mountain'), Charles Roiron outlined the demands of mountain life, that would disabuse critics and potential recruits of the view that life was easy in Jeunesse et Montagne. Negotiating steep and dangerous mountain paths erased any romantic ideas about the mountain's

[84] André Montagnier, 'Pourquoi la montagne?' *Trait d'Union, édition spéciale de la jeunesse aérienne*, No. 1, March 1943.

'glaciers and torrents' and the chalets in which recruits lived could hardly be described as picturesque with their 'disjointed walls, earth floor, and miserable roof.' And where, Roiron continued, was the 'poetry of nights spent in the mountain in the cold [and] discomfort, on a hard bed in which a tired body struggles to relax?' It was the leader's task to make new recruits accept and take pride in the 'difficult but magnificent life, stripped of all romanticism.' [85]

A report by Abbé Pragneres on a Jeunesse et Montagne camp backed up Roiron's claim that it was a 'difficult but magnificent life.' Pragneres, who visited the camp at Pont d'Espagne in January, described how the boys rose at dawn to run in the snow in 'light-clothing' and carry out exercises with 'bare torsos.' At one stage, the weather was so bad that donkeys could not be used to collect food supplies, so the Jeunesse et Montagne recruits built an igloo to shelter the animals before collecting the food themselves on skis. For Pragneres, this was proof that mountain had fostered 'courage and tenacity, a taste for risk, a spirit of sacrifice, [and] energy that overcomes all obstacles.' There was also a sense of moral improvement in the harsh landscape. Pragneres felt a 'joyful hope' up in the 'white silence' of the mountains where new moral heights were being reached. [86]

Sometimes, however, the mountain proved too much of a test. On 25 November 1943, a Jeunesse et Montagne cohort mounted an expedition to the Lac Blanc plateau. Slowed down by inexperienced climbers, the group was forced to endure a storm in a makeshift bivouac. The group leader regularly woke his charges to prevent them from freezing to death and encouraged them to sing to maintain

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[85] Roiron, 'Notre école: la montagne.'
[86] Abbé Pragneres, 'Une visite au camp de "Jeunesse et Montagne" au Pont d'Espagne,' *Bulletin Pyrénéen*, No. 237, 1941, 74-77.

morale and attract rescuers. Their voices were heard, but the storm prevented rescuers (including a Wehrmacht detachment) from reaching them. In the end, eight climbers died, four disappeared, and nine survived (of which five were hospitalised). For Jeunesse et Montagne, the lessons to be drawn from this tragedy were the reminder that mountains must treated seriously, that allowances must be made for inexperienced climbers weakened by wartime deprivations, and that climbers must be aware of the unpredictability of the mountain: 'on the mountain, like in war, surprises happen and upset the best laid plans.' [87]

These deaths and the missing climbers seem to have caused a degree of soul-searching within the organisation's higher ranks. Jeunesse et Montagne's Head-Commissioner, André Roussy de Sales, who had taken charge after Faure's departure for North Africa in November 1940, asked whether it was justified to risk the lives of young French men, at such a difficult time. He concluded, however, that it was worth continuing with mountain training and its 'immense sorrows and joys' as it created future leaders and pilots. For him, the deaths became a sacrifice and a lesson for the youth of France, showing the importance of collective life and the 'Faire Face' ethos. [88]

Due to a scarcity of evidence, it is difficult to determine the extent to which the alpinist philosophy of self-sacrifice, physical renewal, tenacity, and the love of risk filtered down to Jeunesse et Montagne's recruits. The cahiers produced by some units suggest that the young men's lives were dominated by forestry work, fatigue, and thoughts of food (punctuated by skiing lessons) rather than testing themselves

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[87] 'Commentaires sur la catastrophe du Lac Blanc (rapport de la commission d'enquête de "Jeunesse et Montagne"),' *Jeunesse Aérienne: Bulletin de Chefs*, No. 41, 15 March 1944, 1-5.
[88] Quoted in ibid, 6-7.

against the mountain or becoming new men. [89] Lionel Therray, who went on to become one of France's most celebrated mountaineers and who took part in Maurice Herzog's famous 1950 expedition to the Himalayan peak of Annapurna, remembers the tough life he experienced in Jeunesse et Montagne which was tempered by the 'team spirit, atmosphere of good humour, gusto (*entrain*), camaraderie, [and] enthusiasm.' Such was the atmosphere of 'collective exaltation and exhausting work' that Therray apparently experienced 'some of the most intense and totally happy days imaginable.' While this life equipped Therray with endurance skills that proved useful on latter expeditions, others, he believed, suffered from the punishing regime, ending up in an exhausted physical state. Consequently, an experience that was received initially in an enthusiastic manner descended into a 'sort of hell.' [90]

It seems, therefore, that Vichy's attempt to rebuild masculinity in the mountains was somewhat problematic. [91] This reflects wider problems with the regime's attempts to rebuild French manhood. Historians, such as Claire Duchen, contend that it was only during Liberation that French masculinity was restored, through such practices as shaving the heads of female collaborators. [92] More specifically, like many other Vichy-sponsored initiatives, the aims of Jeunesse et Montagne were ultimately diluted as a result of the difficulties of the moment. Not

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[89] See 'Le cahier de l'Equipe Claude (26 Nov 42- 04 Juin 43)- Le Planet- Centre de Beaufort); 'Le cahier des Equipes Vincent I et II- St Guérin- Centre de Beaufort'; and 'Le cahier de l'Equipe Grenet (partiel)- St Guérin- Centre de Beaufort,' at Jeunesse et Montagne website, http://www.jeunesse-et-montagne.org/creation/annexe.html, 26 November 2005, viewed 29 March 2006.

[90] Lionel Terray, *Les conquérants de l'inutile: des Alpes à l'Annapurna* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), 48-58.

[91] More generally, Paxton argues that 'it is doubtful that Vichy's efforts to indoctrinate French youth bore much fruit.' *Vichy France*, 164.

[92] Claire Duchen, 'Crime and Punishment in Liberated France: The Case of the les femmes tondues,' in Claire Duchen and Irene Bandhauer-Schöffmann (eds.) *When War was Over: Women, War and Peace in Europe, 1940-1956* (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), 237. See also Kelly, 'The Reconstruction of Masculinity at the Liberation,' 117-28.

least, German demands for labour and the STO scheme meant that many recruits were forced to leave the mountains to work in factories on the plains below. As well as fulfilling labour requirements, this movement to the plains alleviated other German concerns. The German authorities had long been suspicious of French youth groups carrying out such activities as skiing. Hinting at possible military activity, one German memorandum asked, 'by giving instruction in skiing will not other interests other than sporting ones be pursued?' [93] In the end, German authorities demanded the dissolution of Jeunesse et Montagne units in January 1944, which were transformed into 'Détachments de Jeunes Travailleurs pour le Ministre de la Production Industrielle.' [94]

The notion of a healthy and uplifting life in the mountains that would create a new French elite dissolved into the everyday realities of industrial labour. Furthermore, and more worryingly for the Vichy regime, Jeunesse et Montagne groups, along with the Chantiers de la Jeunesse, began to be attacked for supplies and infiltrated by the *maquis*.[95] This development is indicative of how the resistance began to physically and imaginatively reclaim mountain space.

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[93] Quoted in Halls, *Youth of Vichy France*, 199.

[94] 'Aux lecteurs du "Bulletin des Chefs,"' *Jeunesse Aérienne, Bulletin des Chefs*, No. 40, 15 February- 1 March 1944, 1.

[95] According to Kedward, 'the transfer of food, clothes, equipment, and recruits from the desertions and raids confirmed in a material way the transfer of credibility from Vichy to the Resistance.' *In Search of the Maquis*, 83. The Jeunesse et Montagne entry on the French version of Wikipedia (an online encyclopaedia) claims that Jeunesse et Montagne recruits formed a large part of the maquis Constant and the maquis d'Oisans. As this entry is unreferenced, it must be treated with a degree of caution. See 'Jeunesse et Montagne,' Wikipédia, http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeunesse_et_Montagne, accessed 23 August 2006. The modern reincarnation of Jeunesse et Montagne claims that thirty one former members of the organisation died in the resistance. 'Notre contribution à la résistance,' Jeunesse et Montagne website, http://www.jeunesse-et-montagne.org/creation/annexe.html, consulted 22 August 2006. For more on the links between resistance and Jeunesse et Montagne, see Travers, *Politique et représentations*, 241-53.

Chapter Five

Mountains and resistance

Just as they did with the forest (see chapter three), the emergence of rural resistance movements reclaimed mountain space from Vichy incrementally. As a consequence, mountains in Vichy France were integrated into a long history of outlaws and oppositional elements seeking refuge in the mountains, in France and elsewhere. [96]

France's Jewish refugees had gathered in mountain villages and alpine tourist resorts since 1940, taking advantage of the facilities and cover offered by hotels and medical establishments (many of which offered "climate cures"), as well as the compliance of mountain communities. [97] In the Vercors, Villard-de-Lans sheltered numerous Jewish refugees, as well others, such as the 200 students of the Polish *lycée* in Paris. [98] The mobilisation of mountain space as sites of refuge and armed resistance intensified as measures against the Jewish population tightened and the STO scheme came into force from 1943. In general, these later arrivals also relied on the aid and complicity of mountain communities, who, in turn, appreciated the sudden influx of young men to work in the fields and forests that had been deprived of labour. [99] At the same time, throughout France's mountainous regions, resistance

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[96] For this history, see Bozonnet, *Des monts et des mythes*, 159.

[97] In certain places, however, there were some tensions between residents and Jewish refugees. As many of the new arrivals were wealthy, food prices on the black market soared. Boulet, 'Montagne et résistance en 1943,' 262-63.

[98] Gilles Vergnon, *Le Vercors: histoire et mémoire d'un maquis* (Paris: Les Éditions de l'Atelier/ Éditions Ouvrières, 2002), 32-3.

[99] Boulet, 'Montagne et résistance en 1943,' 265; and Paul et Suzanne Silvestre, *Chronique des Maquis de l'Isère, 1943-44* (Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 1995), 35. As Garrier highlights, many of the early camps were established between 800 and 1500 metres of altitude where the mountain was more domesticated than the rocky, icy summits of the *haute montagne*, which were mistrusted by peasants, STO evaders, and resistors alike. Garrier, Montagnes en résistance,' 211.

organisations (who had originally considered mountains to be too far from their predominantly urban-based activity) began to welcome and organise bands of *réfractaires* into *maquis* units with the aim of conducting sabotage and ultimately armed resistance against Vichy and German forces.

The installation of mountain *maquis* units is a complex history with numerous variations due to geographical, social, and economic factors. [100] In the Vercors, for instance, the socialist Franc-Tireur network was essential in the establishment of *maquis* camps, the first of which was created at Ambel from 6 January 1943 onwards. [101] Overall, however, the *maquis*, supported by local communities and resistance networks, began to wrestle physical and imaginative control of mountain space from Vichy. As the Prefect of the Corrèze observed in 1943, 'mountains [...] have become the receptacle of terrorists.' [102] But mountains were not just end destinations for the resistance. The example of escape routes across the Pyrenees is a case in point. Here, mountains represented a dangerous, difficult, yet invaluable means to an end; safety in Spain. [103]

So far, no detailed study exists of the *maquis*' representation and experience of the mountain environment, but based on *maquisard* memoirs of the Vercors it seems that key similarities existed with CAF's and Jeunesse et Montagne's

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[100] For this history see Boulet, 'Montagne et résistance en 1943,' 267-69; Garrier, 'Montagnes en résistance,' 211-213; and Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, 19-115; Olivier Vallade, 'L'enracinement de la Résistance iséroise,' in Jean-Marie Guillon and Robert Mencherini, *La Résistance et les Européens du Sud* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999), 191-200. For a specific example other than the Vercors see Alain Dalotel, *Le Maquis des Glières* (Paris: Plon, 1992).

[101] Vergnon, *Vercors*, 39-45.

[102] Quoted in François Boulet, 'Deux-montagnes-maquis exemplaires dans la France occupée (1943-1944): la montagne limousine et la Haute-Savoie,' in Vincent Brousse and Philippe Grancoing, *Un siècle militant: Engagement(s), Résistance(s), et Mémoire(s) au XX^e siècle en Limousin* (Limoges: Presses Universitaires de Limoges, 2005), 63.

[103] See Emilienne Eychenne, *Montagnes de la peur et de l'espérance: le franchissement de la frontière espagnole pendant la seconde guerre mondiale dans le département des Hautes-Pyrénées* (Toulouse: Privat, 1980).

mobilisation of mountains. [104] For a start, masquisards recorded the experience of life in the mountains as a factor in revitalising their masculinity. Pierre Tenant revelled to be among the 'young men' with their 'clear and kind faces' dressed as '*montagnards*.' He remembers one day of 'magnificent weather' spent among the 'ardent youth' of the Vercors who 'impatiently waited for the Allied landings.' [105] Albert Darier remembers the sun bronzing the *maquisards*' 'naked torsos' in the pure mountain air. In July 1944 he recalls a 'magnificent day. The men, most of whom went bare-chested, exposed their already bronzed bodies to the sun.' For these *maquisards*, being in the mountains with the aim of freeing France was a way of 'learning to become men' (*apprentissage d'hommes*). [106] The photographs of Marcel Jansen, a budding photographer and member of the Maison des jeunes de Romans who later joined the *maquis*, capture groups of young *maquisards* turning bronze under the mountain sun as they transport arms across the massif and learn to use their weapons, encapsulating a sense of youthful vigour and freedom (see figure three). [107]

As Jansen's photographs suggest, *maquisards*, like the Jeunesse et Montagne organisation, saw mountains as healthy places. This was nothing new. Alpine air and good health had been associated together since the eighteenth century onwards,

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[104] Similarly, there were parallels between Vichy's and the resistance's conception of forest space. See Chapter Three.
[105] Pierre Tenant, *Vercors: Haut-Lieu de France, Souvenirs* (Grenoble: Arthaud, 1948), 18, 44.
[106] Albert Darier, *Tu Prendras les Armes* (Valence: Imprimerie Nouvelle, 1973 [1994]), 151-2, 219.
[107] *Les photos de Marcel Jansen: reporter au maquis* (Valance: Editions Peuple Libre, 1994). Jansen was originally from Lorraine and was 18 in 1940, when his family were expelled from Metz. In 1943 he began to engage in resistance activity, guiding *maquisards* to camps in the Vercors and providing them with food. He himself fought in the Vercors, before descending to Romans on 10 August 1944 to help liberate the town. See Paul Jansen, 'La jeunesse de la Résistance,' in Ibid. 11-14.

especially since the development of climate cures.[108] The Vercors had long been known and celebrated for its pure air. In 1904, Henri Ferrand described the massif as 'a place of pleasure, of rest, of the *cure d'air*. It's the Garden where humanity remakes itself.' The plateau was the place for holidays 'blessed with pure air.' [109] As Anne Sgard notes, by the beginning of the twentieth century the Vercors' pure mountain air was believed to keep the *montagnard* free from the corruption of civilisation and provided tourists with a healthy break from the polluted city. [110] During the war, it seems that *maquisards* (and Jeunesse et Montagne) echoed these associations between health and mountain air.

Like Jeunesse et Montagne, *maquisards* recognised the rigours of mountain life, especially in winter. One maquisard remembers waking up in the freezing cold; 'in the morning we found our shoes frozen. The bread and meat were also frozen. At night, ice formed under our blankets in front of our mouths.' [111] Winter could be a demoralising time in the mountains; 'the trees were bare and black, and our hopes, like them, seemed bald and withered.' [112] The winter weather was indeed the cause of much suffering; 'the cold, the north wind, [and] the rain formed a coalition that, very often, worried us more than the "boche" or the Italians,' remembers one. [113] Although in the Vercors and elsewhere, many *maquisards* left their camps in the

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[108] See Jean-Paul Bozonnet and Daniel Grunwald, 'Montagne et santé: un mythe qui ne manque pas d'air,' *L'Alpe* 27 (Spring 2005), 6-11.
[109] Henri Ferrand, *Le Vercors, le Royanais et les Quatre Montagnes* (Grenoble: Librairie Alexandre Gratier et Jules Rey, 1904), i-ii.
[110] Anne Sgard, 'Paysages du Vercors: entre mémoire et identité,' *Revue de géographie alpine, hors-série* (1997), 50.
[111] Quoted in Paul and Suzanne Silvestre, *Chronique des Maquis de l'Isère*, 168.
[112] Stephen, *Vercors*, 50.
[113] 'Histoire des Camps C. 6, C. 8, et C. 11,' in *Le Vercors raconté par ceux qui l'ont vécu* (Grenoble: Association nationale des Pionniers et combattants volontaires du Vercors, 1990), 98.

winter of 1943, the ones who stayed benefited from extra security provided by the snow. [114]

But throughout the year, life in the Vercors was an 'exhausting existence.' [115] Hunger and hardship formed part of everyday life. *Masquisards* spent their days cutting wood, fetching water, and securing food supplies, a routine that could become monotonous and, as a consequence, boredom could take root in the camps.[116] Some believed that nature seemed to conspire against them, heightening their sense of danger and exhausting them through the sheer physical exertions of mountain life. This was particularly the case at night. Gilbert Joseph remembers walking in the darkness: 'the physical effort transformed the acoustics: all of nature seemed to buzz with a thousand stridulations of insects. But it was just the pulsations of our arteries and the accelerated beating of the heart which bored through to the bottom of our being.' [117] Away from roads and forestry routes, simply moving around the Vercors was a tiring and time-consuming activity, especially up steep mountain slopes; 'sometimes we had to walk on all fours. Often we stumbled and had to grab a branch or bush to stop ourselves tumbling,' remembers Dacier. [118] Mountains were also dangerous places and at least one *maquisard* paid the ultimate price, tumbling down a ravine to meet his death. [119]

In another parallel with CAF's and Jeunesse et Montagne's representations of mountains, it seems that *maquisards* felt themselves detached and superior to

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[114] Garrier, 'Montagnes en résistance,' 213.
[115] Jean Dacier, *Ceux de maquis, coups de main et combats: l'épopée d'une compagnie d'F.F.I du Vercors* (Grenoble: Arthaud, 1945), 76.
[116] See 'Histoire des Camps C. 6, C. 8, et C. 11,' 97; Gilbert Joseph, *Combattant du Vercors* (Paris, Fayard, 1972), 21; and Stephen, *Vercors*, 32.
[117] Joseph, *Combattant du Vercors*, 12.
[118] Dacier, *Ceux de maquis*, 76.
[119] Darier, *Tu Prendras les Armes*, 87.

those on the plains. [120] Darier recalls that it was 'nothing like life down below. The air that they breathe doesn't have the same taste.' [121] As Darier's comment suggests, the revitalising freedom of the mountains was contrasted with life on the plain below. Stephen felt himself 'cut off from the world, a recluse between the sky and the earth,' a life to which he became 'easily accustomed.' [122] Tenant recalls how this existence 'contrasted with the stifling life that one led throughout occupied France.' How different to the 'pure and invigorating air' of the 'magnificent Vercors.' [123]

There were, however, key differences between Vichy's and the resistance's mountain mobilisation. Not least, *maquisards* placed a greater emphasis on the sense of freedom they felt in the Vercors. The fresh mountain air enhanced these sentiments, especially after the mass mobilisation following the D-Day landings and the "sealing off" of the massif from the rest of Occupied France. One resister recalls that they 'were...no longer part of the French State, *hein*, we were completely separate. That was something quite sensational.'[124] Road signs declared '*ici commence le pays de la Liberté*' ('here begins the land of freedom') and a large tricolour flew from the summits. Yet even before the heady days of June and July 1944 one *maquisard* remembers that 'we had a vivid sense of freedom.' [125] This freedom was unforgettable according to *Aux Armes!*; 'one breathed the air of freedom, one practised a fraternity, an honour, which no one who was there will ever

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[120] In general, Jackson argues that resistance 'rhetoric celebrated the cleansing purity of mountain life away from the corruption of the city.' *France: The Dark Years*, 507.
[121] Darier, *Tu Prendras Les Armes*, 182.
[122] Stephen, *Vercors*, 43.
[123] Tenant, *Vercors: Haut-Lieu de France*, 20, 36.
[124] Interview with Paul Borel in *Enquêtes sur la mémoire orale des anciens du Maquis du Vercors. 1e rapport intermédiare* (Avignon: 1992).
[125] Interview with Pierre Bichet, Pontarlier, 31 July 2005. Tapes and notes in author's possession.

forget.' [126] Fresh mountain life was equated to freedom from the Occupation. Tenant remembers that 'the weather was magnificent in this month of June. The sky is a resplendent blue. And above all, up there, on the verdant summits, one feels free.' [127]

As Anna Balzarro suggests, mountains symbolised freedom and resistance during the war while fascism and oppression were left behind in the valleys.[128] The construction of mountains as pure spaces of resistance against oppression continues today. Gil Emprin and Jacques Loiseau, curators of the recent exhibition 'The Alps at War' at Grenoble's Museum of Resistance and Deportation, argue that the solidarity and freedom of the Alps represents a different kind of Europe to the one embodied by Auschwitz. [129]

Furthermore, it appears that *maquisards* celebrated more poetic images of the mountains. As *maquisard* and novelist Jean-Pierre Chabrol wrote, 'to have climbed towards the summits, towards the sky, to have sought refuge in the heart of the mountain...when you sleep on the bare ground, that changes everything.' [130] Joining the *maquis* allowed *maquisards* to discover the mountain landscape up close. This led to almost banal but enraptured observations of the mountain scenery and lives of its inhabitants, such as a shepherd leading his sheep to pasture. [131] But the mountain experience could also border on the mysterious, even the sublime. Before climbing up to the Vercors, Darier had been fascinated by this 'mysterious land,' and on the

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[126] *Aux armes!* No. 10, July 1945, 3.
[127] Tenant, *Vercors: Haut-Lieu de France*, 56.
[128] Anna Balzarro, *Le Vercors et la zone libre de l'Alto tortonese: récits, mémoire, histoire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002), 181.
[129] Gil Emprin and Jacques Loiseau, *Alpes en guerre, 1939-1945: une mémoire en partage* (Veurey: Éditions le Dauphiné, 'collection les patrimoines', 2003), 3.
[130] Quoted in H. R. Kedward, 'The maquis and the culture of the outlaw,' in Kedward and Austin, *Vichy France and the Resistance*, 24.
[131] Dacier, *Ceux de maquis*, 60-1, 66-7.

plateau de Veymont he discovers a 'landscape a little out of this world' consisting of 'tormented rocks' and devoid of vegetation. For Darier, this was an 'anachronistic landscape' with few human traces, where one could easily become lost and stumble into danger during a storm or at night-time. [132]

The Vercors also inspired poetics in Stephen, who recalls climbing in the Vercors on a clear, sunny day where 'on each side [of us] the immense plantations of the Méaudre forest seemed like an infinite temple, of which the thousands of giant columns supported the intense blue dome over our heads.'[133] Stephen's observations echo those of Albert Marchon, who, in 1927, rhapsodised over the Vercors' 'clear sky, free from the past' and its pine forests that resembled the columns of the 'temple of Arcadia.' [134] The sense of discovery and authenticity is remembered to this day. In a 2004 interview with *Libération* newspaper, Alain le Ray, the Vercors' military leader, described the massif as 'a landscape where you could shelter for three months of solitude and where you could discover something about yourself, and also about nature.' [135] These visions of the Vercors recall, consciously or not, representations of the mountain sublime advanced by romantic poets, writers, and artists. [136]

Like Vichy's promotion of alpinism and the ideology of Jeunesse et Montagne, *maquisards* experienced and represented mountains as healthy, pure, spaces that tested men and made them physically and morally stronger. Both sides

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[132] Darier, *Tu Prendras les Armes*, 220-1.
[133] Stephen, *Vercors*, 43.
[134] Albert Marchon, *Le Vercors* (Paris: Éditions Émile-Paul Frères, 1927), 100.
[135] Quoted in Eric Aeschimann, 'Héros du plateau,' *Liberation*, May 17, 2004, www.liberation.fr/page.php?Article=206301, 2.
[136] On the invention of the mountain sublime, see Coates, *Nature*, 129-34; McFarlane, *Mountains of the Mind*, 74-7; and Schrepfer, *Nature's Altars*, 41-4.

also portrayed the mountains as elite spaces. They were a privileged place in which to rejuvenate French men and being in the mountains set the mountaineers apart from the rest of France (even if both Vichy and the resistance claimed that the remade males would ultimately descend and save France). But in its mobilisation of mountains, the resistance went one stage further than Vichy by bestowing a military function on France's summits.

Militarised mountains

The mobilisation of mountains in Vichy France reached a peak with the *maquis'* designation of the Vercors as a military base, transforming it into a "natural fortress." In this case, mountains were to be a substitute for arms and men; by commandeering the Vercors' topography, the resisters hoped to counter the numerical and technological strength of German forces. In 1942, Pierre Dalloz, a keen alpinist and ex-editor of CAF's *La Montagne* revue, identified the Vercors as a 'natural fortress' and developed the Plan Montagnards. [137]

As he claimed after the war, Dalloz believed that 'it is a fact that this massif, with its rare and difficult access routes, its immense forests, its remote pastures, its sheepfolds, its little known network of caves, could provide the most secure refuge for outlaws.' For Dalloz, the massif's resistance potential came 'as much from the configuration of its soil as the independent and courageous character of its sons.' The Vercors radiated resistance spirit. Indeed, it was this quasi-mystical power that, Dalloz claimed, inspired the Plan Montagnards in the first place; 'I opened my door.

[137] Vergnon, *Vercors*, 46.

I breathed in the night's cold air. The familiar almond tree, stirred by the wind, brushed the starry sky with its foliage... The mountains were straight ahead. There was the Vercors. I reflected for a long time. The darkness was an accomplice. The moment was heavy for me, full of responsibility, resolution, and hope.' [138]

Dalloz proposed that the Vercors could shelter a substantial number of *maquisards*, as well as offering Allied forces a secure aerial base within France for the anticipated landings in Provence. He claims in his memoirs that on a visit to the Vercors, de Gaulle's envoy General Delestraint was suitably impressed by the massif's potential; 'the General declared himself stunned by the beauty of the place and surprised by the strength of the plateau's defences.'[139] Dalloz's co-alpinists helped him to flesh out the Plan Montagnards. Marcel Pourchier, a retired commander and ex-alpinist, conducted a survey of the Vercors and Alain Le Ray, a member of the Groupe de haute montagne (an elite group of alpinists), helped finalise it, dividing the Vercors up into five sections and agreeing on the choice of Vassieux-en-Vercors to construct a runway for Allied planes. [140]

Elsewhere, French officers from alpine regiments were keen to realise the military potential of mountains. Commandant Vallette d'Osia from the 27^{e} BCA envisaged the creation of a secret Alpine army and established a training school at the Col des Saisies in February 1943 to work towards this aim. [141] The winter of 1943 was also when ex-army officers, many of whom were trained to deal with the exigencies of mountain life, entered the *maquis*, bringing with them new expertise

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[138] ADI 13 R 1043 'Naissance des maquis du Vercors par Pierre Dalloz,' 2-4, 7. See also Pierre Dalloz, *Véritiés sur le drame du Vercors* (Paris: Fernand Lanore, 1979), 20-1.
[139] Dalloz, *Véritiés sur le drame du Vercors*, 76.
[140] Paul Dreyfus, *Vercors: citadelle de liberté* (Grenoble: Arthaud, 1997 [1969]), 47-50.
[141] Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, 133-4.

and reinforcing its military orientation. [142] In the Vercors, this took the form of military training that instructed other *maquisards* on how best to use mountainous terrain during combat.[143]

Recent military history gave credence to the belief in the military potential of mountains. In the summer of 1940, French forces had successfully repelled German and Italian attacks in the Alps, aided, at times, by the mountain climate and the construction of the 'little Maginot Line' which maximised the natural defences of the mountains. [144] More specifically, defensive preparations in June 1940 had incorporated the Vercors into a scheme under which military planners envisaged it as a fallback position. [145] Mountains, then, presented themselves as impenetrable and useful natural allies for French forces before and after the defeat.

Dalloz's designation of the Vercors as a military base echoed previous evocations of the massif's fortress-like qualities. In 1904, Ferrand identified the 'fortress of the Vercors' and the 'almost continuous ring of abrupt escarpments that surround it.' According to Ferrand, the 'steep walls' of the Vercors' cliffs 'dominate the surrounding plains and rise up inaccessibly like the ramparts of a fortress.' [146] Over a quarter of a century later, Jules Blache drew attention to the 'high white [limestone] wall' that 'defends the east of the Vercors massif for fifty kilometres... Nowhere else in the French Alps is there a façade as remarkable for its regularity

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[142] Garrier, 'Montagnes en résistance,' 213.
[143] 'Équipe volante,' in Pierre Bolle (ed.), *Grenoble et le Vercors: de la Résistance à la Libération 1940-44* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 2003 [1985]), 171; Stephen, *Vercors*, 43; and Pierre Vial, *La Bataille du Vercors 1943-44* (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1991), 50.
[144] J. E. and H. W. Kaufmann, *The Maginot Line: None Shall Pass* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 76,-83, 133-40; and Général Etienne Plan and Éric Lefevre, *La Bataille des Alpes, 10-25 juin 1940: l'armée invaincue* (Paris: Charles-Lavauzelle, 1982). For more on the military geography of mountains see Winters *et al*, *Battling the Elements*, 170-5.
[145] Vergnon, *Le Vercors*, 29.
[146] Ferrand, *Le Vercors, Le Royanais et Les Quatre Montagnes*, ii, v, 23.

and dimensions.' [147] As Sgard argues, these writers' deployment of "natural fortress" imagery created an impression of unity within the massif, which had previously been seen as a disparate collection of *pays*. [148] Constructions of the Vercors' unity and singularity were then strengthened by the Plan Montagnards.

Perceptions of the Vercors fortress-like qualities were reinforced by *maquisards'* ascent into the massif, which was often physically challenging, involving a bus ride to nearby villages before 'attacking the mountain' on foot.[149] One *maquisard* recalls his difficult journey up into the Vercors from the village of Beaufort-sur-Gervanne: 'the road climbed steeply alongside a small, calm stream, gently bubbling over the rocks. This must have been a torrent in the springtime. Our chocolate and bread had long gone, and we were thirsty. We carried on across wild gorges, without coming across a house or a person.'[150] Potential *maquisards* could also be unprepared for the rigours of mountain life. Marcel Brun-Bellut remembers surveying his companions as they prepared to make the trip up to Ambel in February 1943; 'some were dressed in low heeled shoes, overcoats and [carried] suitcases, others [were] in overalls, carrying in one hand a lunchbag and in the other a blanket folded in a semi circle. Others carried a jute bag containing everything on one shoulder with a two litre waterbottle slung across the other. Few were suitably dressed to face the biting cold and endure the tough mountain life of winter.' [151] Some new arrivals apparently arrived at Ambel with bleeding feet. [152]

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[147] Blache, *Les massifs de la Grande-Chartreuse et du Vercors: Tome I*, 82.
[148] Sgard, 'Paysages du Vercors,' 21-2, 45.
[149] Fernand Rude, 'Le Vercors,' in Bolle, *Grenoble et le Vercors*, 101.
[150] Dacier, *Ceux de maquis*, 60.
[151] Marcel Brun-Bellut, 'Ambel, premier maquis du Vercors,' in *Le Vercors raconté par ceux qui l'ont vécu*, 79-80.
[152] Stephen, *Vercors*, 32.

Chapter Five

The resistance's mobilisation of the Vercors as an impenetrable military base, however, involved the erasure of certain aspects of its recent history, such as developments in its transport system and the growth of tourism. The Vercors was anything but inaccessible by the 1940s. Numerous hotel rooms catered for summer visitors and winter skiers, who could access the massif via the Grenoble–Villard-de-Lans electric tramway or specially laid-on coaches (in 1928 coaches brought over 21,000 visitors to marvel at the Grands-Goulets gorges). Before the war, the towns and villages in the Vercors had seized the opportunity to generate extra income from visitors; La-Chapelle-en-Vercors opened a tourist information office in 1930 and, on the eve of the Second World War, Villard-de-Lans was the biggest tourist resort in the Pre-Alps and planned to build new hotels, an ice rink, and ski lifts. [153]

Despite the fact that the Vercors was accessible to day-trippers from Grenoble, the Plan Montagnards was implemented. Construction began on a runway at Vassieux-en-Vercors, mines were laid along roadsides, and defences mounted at key access points. In June and July 1944, the number of *maquisards* swelled (a mobilisation order was issued on 6 June 1944, which was retracted to little effect four days later), attempts were made to regularise *maquis* units along military lines, and the massif was apparently sealed off from the rest of France. In a display of their confidence, the *maquis* reinstated the French republic within the imposing "walls" of the Vercors and held Bastille Day celebrations on the fourteenth of July. [154]

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[153] Blache, *Les massifs de la Grande-Chartreuse et du Vercors:Tome II*, 2, 419-21; and Raoul Blanchard, *Les Alpes occidentales Tome I: les Préalpes françaises du Nord* (Tours: Arrault et Cie, 1938), 281.

[154] See Vergnon, *Vercors*, 83-112.

Chapter Five

The Vercors violated

The topography of the mountains might have inspired hope that the "Republic of the Vercors" would be victorious. As military geographers Patrick O'Sullivan and Jesse W. Miller suggest, 'mountains have been a traditional haven for a lightly armed force opposing a heavily armed foe.' [155] But the Vercors showed itself to be penetrable by a heavily armed foe. German forces, who had been repelled from Saint-Nizier on 15-16 June 1944, returned on 20 July 1944, landing their gliders on the recently completed runway at Vassieux-en-Vercors and storming mountain passes with units trained for mountain combat.

Controversy still rages about the Plan Montagnards and the degree of support the Free French and the Allies accorded it. Leaving aside the supposed Allied and Free French "betrayal" of the Vercors, a controversy heightened by Cold War political posturing, it seems that the leaders of the *maquis* had considerably over-estimated the area's defensive strength. [156] With hindsight, then, this military mobilisation of the mountain can at best be described as a noble failure. Paul Silvestre argues that the Vercors' apparent fortress-like character generated a false sense of security that obscured the difficulties involved in living on the massif, such as the paucity of the water supply. He contends that *maquis* groups used mountainous areas most efficiently as a base for sabotage attacks on enemy forces. Above all, the most effective units were mobile and dispersed, a view backed up by

[155] O' Sullivan and Miller, *Geography of Warfare*, 65.
[156] For more on this controversy, see Vergnon, *Vercors*, 109-12, 157-77.

contemporary Allied intelligence.[157] In a similar vein, resistance historian Henri Noguères outlines the Vercors' defensive frailties. By mid-June, German troops had already succeeded in opening up an access route through Saint-Nizier. The central plateau was also accessible by road from the South East, and even the apparently impenetrable eastern ridge contained a series of mountain passes which Axis alpine troops were trained to breach. Noguères also points to strategic errors on the part of the *maquis* leaders, such as failing to defend Vassieux-en-Vercors adequately and under-estimating the enemy's strength. [158]

In defence of the Plan Montagnards, Alain Le Ray has stressed the elements of mobility it contained and the importance accorded to guerrilla tactics.[159] But as historian and former *maquisard* Fernand Rude highlights, it was dangerous for large groups of *maquis* to gather in one place as they were easily encircled and destroyed by the enemy.[160] The case of the Vercors and the Glières plateau battle of March 1944, when *maquisards* where overrun by superior German forces, suggest that mountains were no guarantee of military victory. [161] As Garrier argues, 'we must highlight the false idea that altitude creates distance and that natural barriers

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[157] Paul Silvestre, 'STO, maquis et guérilla dans l'Isère,' *Revue d'histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale* 130 (1983), 11, 47; and ADI 13 R 1043 'Note sur les Alpes de Provence,' rédigé à Londrès – remis au Commandant Manuel, chef du B.C.R.A.L., May 12, 1944, 1.
[158] Henri Noguères, *Histoire de la Résistance de 1940 à 1945. Tome 5: Juin 1944- Mai 1945* (Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont, 1981), 342-3, 375.
[159] Alain Le Ray, 'Préface,' in Silvestre and Silvestre, *Chronique des Maquis de l'Isère*, 16; Vallade, 'L'enracinement de la Résistance iséroise,' 199.
[160] Rude 'Le Vercors,' 119-21.
[161] For a brief overview of Glières' history and the ensuing controversy over strategy, see Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, 132-41.

guarantee absolute security.' [162] Topography did not determine the outcome of the battle in the way that *maquisards* had planned. [163]

Nor was nature necessarily a natural ally for *maquisards* once defeat seemed inevitable and the order had been given to disperse into the massif. John Houseman, a British liaison officer with the *maquis*, remembers how 'every unusual sound in the woods caused an instant silence among the party – a hunted dog look.' Moreover, the Vercors' paucity of water sources led to agonising thirst. Houseman recalls having to extract water by squeezing the moisture out of moss; 'after two or three hours [of] hard work... I had perhaps ¾ of a pint which, though muddy and having an unwelcome taste, was nectar.'[164] The lack of water also haunted Houseman's colleague, Major Longe, who fell asleep dreaming of the 'pond at Yelverton full of crystal clear water.' Upon discovering a rare stream in the Vercors, he 'almost cried with relief as we dropped face first into the wonderful cold water.'[165]

Movement was also difficult in the forests, 'climbing over rocks, crawling in the dark on our knees, never following the paths.' [166] For Jean Dacier, the silence of the forest oppressed the *maquisards* as they hid from German troops, while for Marcel Brun-Bellot the night was sinister, its silence 'pierced by the cries of foxes

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[162] Garrier, 'Montagnes en résistance,' 219.
[163] As Winters *et al* argue, the 'physical setting within which battles are fought is neither passive nor presumable.' *Battling the Elements*, 3.
[164] IWM 02/52/1 Captain John V. Houseman, diary of Mission Eucalyptus-Vercors, France, August 1944, 12, 25.
[165] IWM 03/54/1 Major D. E. Longe, diary of Vercors mission [n.d.], 45, 62. Water shortages also afflicted Stephen who relied on a boar's watering hole and the generosity of a local peasant to quench his thirst. Stephen, *Vercors: Premier maquis de France*, 163-7.
[166] National Archives, London HS 6/424 First Lt. Andre E. Paray, 'Interallied Mission Eucalyptus to the Vercors [n.d.].

and other beasts' who populated the forests. [167] During the battle at Valchevière, morale can hardly have been helped by the 'torrential rain, downpours of chilling rain, mist, fog, [and] wind.' [168] But nature also gave some encouragement to the desperate *maquisards*. One of them was grateful for the cover accorded to him by rain and fog in skirmishes with German troops. [169] Tenant also remembers how one morning in the Lente forest the 'fog began to dissipate, giving way to the sun. The good weather, coming after days of rain, gave us courage.' [170] Similarly, Darier recalls how nature gave a boost to those maquisards who had miraculously escaped from a cave at Pas de Aiguille; 'the air is still fresh under the trees but the sky is completely blue; the day will be beautiful. It's as if nature wanted to...help the survivors.'[171]

The failure of the Plan Montagnards led to material destruction as the German forces exacted reprisals, highlighting the physical consequences of this military mobilisation of mountains (in addition to the deaths of approximately 800 maquisards and civilians). The "natural fortress" had been breached and violated. Gone were the experiences and representations of a pure, healthy, revitalising mountain landscape. For contemporary observers, it seemed that the conflict had disrupted the normally productive relationship between the inhabitants and their environment. A group of Swiss journalists noted that 'in the villages, in the pastures, on the irregular and sheep-filled higher plateaus, all is burnt, devastated,

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[167] Dacier, *Ceux de maquis*, 135; and Brun-Bellot, 'Ambel, premier maquis du Vercors,' 80.
[168] J. Puech, *La Montagne des sept douleurs (Vercors 1944)* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1945), 57.
[169] ADI 13 R 990 [n.a.] 'Attaque du Vercors, pas du Chattons et de la Selle et opérations qui s'ensuivirent,' [n.d.].
[170] Tenant, *Vercors: Haut-Lieu de France*, 150.
[171] Darier, *Tu prendras les armes*, 277.

destroyed.'[172] It appeared that the German troops had stripped the Vercors bare. All that remained were 'pastures without cows and sheep, bedrooms without floors, forests without echoes. If they could have done, [the soldiers] would have taken light and water with them.' There was an uneasy ambiance in this pillaged land; 'the atmosphere... is of the most atrocious malignancy: avowed torture [was] perpetrated in the fresh air, in the middle of the day at one thousand metres of altitude, where, in normal times,. vets would come to care for the livestock.' [173] At Vassieux-en-Vercors, 'gloomy, ash coloured' vegetation and the grey, heavy sky where ravens circled overhead, added to the foreboding atmosphere of the 'plateau of death,' around which the limestone cliffs emerged out of the clouds. [174] This atmosphere did not go unnoticed by the authorities. The Prefect of the Isère reported that the military 'engagements' had left a 'widespread uneasiness and even a real terror' across the region.[175]

The extent of the atrocities seemed unnatural. The Pionniers du Vercors, the most influential Vercors veterans association, later emphasised the German troops' 'bestiality,' which was 'without precedent.' [176] The Swiss journalists felt that the scale and brutality of the atrocities went beyond the wildness normally found in nature ('beasts don't take pleasure at the suffering of their victims'). They believed that the violence had 'broken the limit of natural things to where good and evil merge together... in front of the survivors, one understands the wickedness of nature

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[172] Albert Béguin, Pierre Courthion, Paul du Bochet, Richard Heyd, Georges Menkès, and Lucien Tronchet, *Le livre noir du Vercors* (Neuchâtel: Editions Ides et Calendes, 1944), 22.
[173] Pierre Courthion, 'L'Atmosphère,' in Béguin *et al*, *Livre noir*, 23.
[174] Puech, *La montagne des sept douleurs*, 64.
[175] ADI 13 R 990, Préfet de l'Isère to Préfet régional, Lyon, July 29, 1944.
[176] ADI 4° 330, Amicale des Pionniers et des Combattants volontaires du Vercors, *Mirreille* opera programme, June 20, 1948.

and men.' [177] It was almost as if the "unnatural" violence had physically stained the mountains and that the bodies of the dead 'traced a bloody border around the summits.' [178] In certain places, the stench of death replaced the fresh mountain air. R. Thibaud, the Drôme's Departemental Director of Civilian Defence, visited Vassieux-en-Vercors and reported the 'odour of death that floated over the plateau' due to the unburied corpses that had been left exposed to the summer sun. [179]

As well as the macabre atmosphere, contemporary reports also laid bare the physical disruption and destruction. For a start, German forces requisitioned livestock to prevent the local population from provisioning *maquis* groups, adding to the already severe shortage of food supplies. As if to worsen the situation further, work in fields had been put on hold due to a shortage of manpower. [180] American geographer Peter Nash carried out a study of this agricultural devastation, reporting that nearly all of Saint-Nizier-du-Moucherotte's chickens had been killed (the mayor claimed that the German troops had killed them 'for the sake of it') and that rabbits and poultry had been stolen from La-Chapelle-en-Vercors, whilst Vassieux-en-Vercors had lost nearly all of its large animals. In all, Nash estimated that the German army had requisitioned twenty-five percent of all livestock, sixty-six

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[177] Albert Béguin, 'Au seuil de l'Enfer,' in Béguin et al. *Livre noir*, 51; Courthion, 'Atmosphère,' 25.
[178] *Aux armes!* 10 July 1945, 3.
[179] ADD 497 W 2 R. Thibaud, 'Les bombardements aériens dans la Drôme au cours de l'année 1944,' 15 January 1945, 7-8.
[180] ADI 13 R 990 M. Duboin, 'Rapport sur les événements survenus dans la région de Villard-de-Lans,' 26 July 1944; and ADI 13 R 990 M. Duboin, 'Rapport sur la situation dans les communes de St Nizier, Villard-de-Lans, Lans, Corrençon, Meaudre, et Autrans,' 1 August 1944.

percent of horses, and thirty-three percent of pigs. Farmers had also endured the loss of substantial quantities of potatoes, wheat, and farm machinery. [181]

In addition, some of the Vercors' forests had been mined, and near Saint-Jean German planes had deposited phosphate bombs setting fire to fields. farms, and forests.[182] On 14 July 1944, Stephen remembers seeing bombs 'boring craters' into fields sending 'geysers of loose earth' up into the sky or 'devastating woodland, breaking up branches with a hail of lead.' [183] Furthermore, 'La Chapelle-en-Vercors and the surrounding countryside had literally been sprayed with projectiles.' according to Thibaud. [184] Marcel Jansen's photographs, which had once captured the youthful atmosphere of camaraderie among tanned, bare-chested *maquisards*, now bore witness to ruined farms and destroyed lives.

The case of the Vercors shows how mountains acted as both a refuge and a trap. It is also an example, albeit an extreme one, of how the war physically transformed a mountain environment. But as this chapter demonstrates, the history of mountains in Vichy France is not just about the sites themselves. It is also about perceptions of mountains, which underscores the interlocking material and cultural histories of warfare. Both Vichy and the resistance saw mountains as spaces of regeneration, discovery, and authenticity, as well as tests of manhood. These ideas

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[181] Peter H. Nash, 'Le massif du Vercors en 1945: étude sur les dévastations causées par l'armée allemande dans une région alpine de la France et de leur effets sur les traits géographiques,' *Revue de Géographie alpine* 34/1 (1946), 91-3.
[182] Stephen, *Vercors*, 125.
[183] Ibid. 129. Similarly, in South Eastern France the conflict of summer 1940 was not without environmental destruction. For instance, one French soldier remembers the French army's use of explosives to blow up a tunnel in the Southern Alps to prevent Italian progression into France. This detonation created an 'immense flame that lit up the whole landscape' and threw up a mass of rocks which cascaded down the mountain. French forces also bombarded the Italian-held fort at Mont Chaberton with 200kg shells in dense mountain fog. It is hard to imagine that this did not cause some damage to the mountainside. See Jean-Louis Panicacci, *Les Alpes-Maritimes de 1939 à 1945: un département dans la tourmente* (Nice: Éditions Serre, 1989), 69.
[184] Thibaud, 'Les bombardements aériens dans la Drôme,' 5-6.

were not new. Robert McFarlane argues that for Victorian mountaineers, 'climbing upwards came to represent – as it still does – the search for an entirely new way of being. Experience was unpredictable, more immediate and more authentic in the mountains. The upper world was an environment which affected both the mind and the body in the ways the cities or the plains never did.'[185] Despite their opposing political aims, this statement rings true for Vichy and the resistance; both tapped into long-standing images of mountains. Notions of masculine renewal and the militarisation of mountains attest to the myriad ways in which mountains mattered and were mobilised in Vichy France. And, as with the forest, human activity and aspirations during "dark years" led to the physical destruction of some mountain environments, such as the Vercors, necessitating their reconstruction in the postwar era.

[185] MacFarlane, *Mountains of the Mind*, 213.

Chapter Six

Reconstructing the French Environment, 1944-1955

In 1918, after four years of war, the French Minster for Agriculture declared that 'several years will suffice to restore Reims cathedral if we commit the necessary resources. But however much we spend, it will take at least a century before the forest of Viel-Armand will recover its former splendour.' [1] Like its predecessor in 1918, the French government in 1944 faced the long-term task of repairing war damage to the French landscape. As it had during the preceding years of war and occupation, nature continued to matter in postwar France, beginning with the Liberation period. During the summer of 1944, Allied and French forces progressively liberated French territory from German Occupation, even if it was not until April 1945 that German troops were forced out of Alsace, Lorraine, and isolated pockets on the Atlantic coast. This was a chaotic time, characterised by a volatile mixture of public expectations, official and unofficial purges of collaborators, roaming bands of maquisards, and the presence of a new set of foreign troops stationed on French soil. [2]

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[1] Quoted in *Eaux et Forêts du 12e au 20e siècle*, 625-27.

[2] On the Liberation, see Alain Brossat, *Libération, fête folle, 6 juin 44- 8 mai 45: mythes et rites ou le grand théâtre des passions populaires* (Paris: Autrement, 1994); and Philippe Buton, *La joie douloureuse: la libération de la France* (Bruxelles: Éditions complexes, 2004).

Chapter Six

Despite the upheavals of the Liberation period, elements of continuity are evident in its environmental history, as in its political and social histories. Not least, intense pressures continued to be exerted on France's natural resources. These pressures came from both civilian and military sources. For despite the obvious differences between the Axis and Allied military presence in France, tensions surfaced between French foresters and Allied troops in the years following Liberation. As Hilary Footitt highlights, the relationship between French civilians and Allied troops was, at times, riddled by misunderstandings and mutual frustrations. [3] Limited natural resources, such as timber, became potentially potent sources of conflict, although Footitt leaves this area unexplored.

Beyond these short term pressures, the opportunity arose to reconstruct the French environment to benefit the nation in the long term. Across Europe, newly formed governments in war-torn countries turned their attention to the urgent task of reconstruction. Yet there was no desire to return to the political, social and economic conditions of the interwar years, which were held partly responsible for the outbreak of the Second World War. [4] To avoid a repeat of the chaos that followed the First World War and to create a stable, prosperous, and peaceful future for the continent, governments and civilians placed their faith in the power of the state to raise living standards, modernise industry, and boost production and consumption. Growth became the new objective and state planning the means to obtain it. [5] More than

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[3] Footitt, *War and Liberation in France*.

[4] As Tony Judt argues, 'the sheer scale of the European calamity opened new opportunities. The war changed everything. A return to the way things had been before 1939 was out of the question almost everywhere.' *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: William Heinemann, 2005), 63.

[5] Daniel W. Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe: Western Europe, America, and Postwar Reconstruction* (London: Longman, 1992), 2, 14.

anywhere else in Western Europe, the French state, under the guidance of technocrats such as Jean Monnet, identified planning as the most effective way to achieve growth and modernisation. [6] As Kedward highlights, the French state took the leading role in planning and implementing national reconstruction, taking measures such as nationalising coal, gas, and other industries to boost productivity and industrial output. [7] Yet although historians have studied political and economic reconstruction, and the rebuilding and modernisation of the urban environment, the reconstruction of the natural environment has been overlooked. [8]

Making the land productive once again, through the reconstruction of farms and forests, was one of the urgent tasks facing the provisional French government as it asserted its authority over French territory under the leadership of Charles de Gaulle. Few areas of institutional and everyday life were left untouched by the project of national reconstruction. As de Gaulle proclaimed in his speech at Bayeux on 16 June 1946, 'we must instigate, despite the immense difficulties, a deep [national] renovation which will lead each Frenchman and each Frenchwomen to greater prosperity, security, [and] happiness.' [9] Demographers strove to induce the French to produce more babies, cultural identity was to be strengthened and rejuvenated, urban areas modernised, and industrial production rationalised and

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[6] Ibid. 17. Judt contends that 'only in France did rhetorical enthusiasm for state planning translate into the real thing. *Postwar*, 68.

[7] Rod Kedward, *La Vie en bleu: France and the French since 1900* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), 350-1.

[8] On political and economic reconstruction, see Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe*. On the urban environment, see Dominique Barjot, Rémi Baudouï, and Danièle Voldman (eds.), *Les reconstructions en Europe, 1945-1949* (Bruxelles: Éditions Complexe, 1997). On the reconstruction of the French urban environment, see Clout, 'Ruins and Revival' 117-39; and Voldman, *La reconstruction des villes françaises*.

[9] Charles de Gaulle, 'Discours de Bayeux, 16 juin 1946,' Charles de Gaulle website, 20 September 2006, http://www.charles-de-gaulle.org/article.php3?id_article=56&page=6, 5.

amplified. [10] As in these areas, the aim was not to restore the environment to its pre-war condition but to initiate its modernisation and rationalisation, as well as rendering it more productive.

This was a difficult yet urgent task. At the same time as they struggled to cope with the heightened material pressures of post-Liberation France, state officials undertook the necessary steps towards environmental reconstruction. The most urgent task was the removal of the millions of mines and other explosives that lay scattered across the landscape, which proved an arduous, dangerous, yet ultimately successful venture. Nature was not a static backdrop for mine clearers, whose job was rendered more difficult and dangerous by topography and vegetation. At the same time, foresters and other officials presented their plans to rationalise and modernise the environment. In the case of the forest, the scale of war damage, growing demands for forestry products, and the uncertainty of international timber markets all contributed to the introduction of the *Fonds Forestier National* (FFN) [voted into law by the Assemblée Nationale in 1946], an ambitious programme to reforest two million hectares of French territory over a timescale of twenty to thirty years.

Parallels existed with Vichy's war on "wasteland." Liberation, as defeat had been, was an opportunity to remake the French landscape, which was seized as eagerly by republican governments as it had been by Vichy. And as in 1940,

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[10] See Karen Adler, 'Demography at Liberation: Using History to Forget the Past,' in Simon Kitson and Hanna Diamond (eds.), *Vichy, Resistance, Liberation: New Perspectives on Vichy France* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 183-94; Richard I. Jobs, 'Tarzan under Attack: Youth, Comics, and Cultural Reconstruction in Postwar France,' *French Historical Studies* 26/4 (Fall 2005): 687-725; Clout, 'Ruins and Revival'; Voldman, *Reconstruction des villes françaises*; and Kedward, *Vie en bleu*, 350-1.

reforestation was identified in 1944 as a necessary step to provide desperately needed resources and ensure the ecological balance of the countryside. State planners after 1944 also benefited from legislative measures introduced under the Vichy regime which gave the state greater control over the forest. There were, however, important differences between the periods following defeat and Liberation. For a start, the exigencies and destructions of war had exposed the apparent "weaknesses" of the countryside and accelerated long-term processes, such as rural depopulation. Furthermore, the scale of the physical destruction of the environment was much greater after Liberation than post-1940. Another key difference was that postwar reconstruction was devoid of the disgraced "back-to-the-land" rhetoric that had glorified the peasant and woodcutter in Vichy France. Instead, rhetorical emphasis was placed on modernisation and rationalisation. And, overall, the FFN was much more successful than Vichy's reforestation drive, due to more favourable peacetime conditions and better financing.

In this chapter, I extend my geographical focus beyond South Eastern France to provide a wider perspective on the history of environmental reconstruction. However, I concentrate most fully on the reconstruction of the forest, a choice dictated by sources and the fact that the forest was identified as one of the habitats in most urgent need of regeneration and modernisation. I begin by outlining the civilian and military pressures exerted on the environment, before turning to mine clearance operations. I then address the plans advanced for reconstruction and consider the largely successful implementation of the FFN, ending with the milestone reached in 1955, when over half a million hectares had been reforested under the scheme.

Continuing pressures on the environment

Liberation did not bring a relaxation of pressures on France's natural resources and, as during the years of war and occupation, demands came from both military and civilian quarters. France continued to fight the remnants of German forces on its territory until spring 1945, as well as contributing resources and soldiers to the Allied invasion of Germany. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the National Military Commission emphasised that all available materials must be diverted to the war effort and, to this end, production must be increased. [11] As a consequence, not only did France have to provide foodstuffs to civilians and materials for reconstruction, it also had to support its own army and those of its Allies.

Like the German and Italian troops before them, Allied soldiers consumed considerable quantities of natural resources whilst stationed on French soil. Timber was in particular demand. As one Allied report of June 1944 noted, 'the requirements of an army in the field for timber and other forestry products exceed in volume the demands for any other local resources.' The Allies, the report continued, would need sawn timber to construct barracks and hospitals, repair railway lines, and rebuild bridges, as well as requiring wooden poles for constructing signal lines, camouflage supports, and telegraph posts. In addition, firewood and charcoal would be needed in 'large quantities.'[12] As this list shows, the comments of Wendall R.

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[11] ADI 13 R 991 La Commission militaire nationale to Mouvements de la résistance, Comités de la Libération, Commissions militaries régionales, départementales, et locales, 7 November 1944.
[12] Plant Sciences Library, University of Oxford, 25557(4), Engineer Division, Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force, 'Utilization of local timber resources in France (Technical Information).

Becton, an Alabama-born forester drafted in to supply Allied engineers in France, were perceptive; 'anything the army needed and had to construct in a hurry was made of wood.'[13]

Given that the Free French were allies in the struggle against Nazi Germany, it appears that British and US planners were more concerned than Axis troops to minimise tensions over forestry resources. In anticipation of the 1944 landings, foresters led by Colonel A. H. Lloyd of the University of Oxford's School of Forestry gathered intelligence on French forestry production and Vichy's forestry legislation. [14] The Allies ultimately planned to use local, French timber resources as this represented an easier and cheaper way to supply troops than shipping timber across the Atlantic. Major General Hughes, the Chief Engineer at the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force, recognised, however, that this strategy might create tensions between Allied forces and French civilians. Consequently, Hughes urged the military to show consideration when securing timber; 'a French forest is a cultivated timber crop and a valuable source of supply for future generations. The people of France will realise the urgent military necessity of local timber utilization but unnecessary destruction by wasteful felling and logging will be strongly resented and may have political repercussions.' [15]

Becton (who was one of fifteen Allied officers in charge of wood supplies in liberated France) presented a largely harmonious picture of cooperation between the

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June 1944, A. H. Lloyd, 'Introduction,' 21 June 1944, 3; and Wendell R. Becton with Elwood Maunder, 'Military Forestry in France after 1944,' *Forest History* 16/3 (October 1972), 42.

[13] Becton, 'Military Forestry in France after 1944,' 40.

[14] See, for instance, Plant Sciences Library, University of Oxford, 25556(b), 'Controlled prices of timber in France in 1942/3 (A summary of the "code de bois"),' May 1944.

[15] Plant Sciences Library, University of Oxford, 25557(4), Engineer Division, Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force, 'Utilization of local timber resources in France,' Major General H. B. W. Hughes, 'The Utilization of Local Timber Resources in France,' 20 June 1944.'

French and the Allies in a 1972 interview. That Allied forces were able to obtain large quantities of timber that had been stranded because of transport difficulties aided the atmosphere of collaboration that Becton portrayed. In addition, they were able to secure wood supplies through local officials, thereby letting the French manage timber production. According to Becton, this 'production came from [French] forests in the regular way through good management practices using local facilities for manufacturing.' From his base in Paris, Becton was apparently able to meet the demands of the Allied forces in Eastern France by filing requisition requests with the Provisional Government. Such was the efficiency of this procedure that in the end there was no need to ship timber supplies from North America. [16]

French forestry files, however, reveal a more contentious story that echoed previous tensions between foresters and Axis soldiers demonstrating that the presence of army units, whatever their identity, placed a burden on already over-stretched forestry production between 1940 and 1946. [17] For instance, in the Nord *département*, US soldiers carried out a 'massive [forestry] exploitation' in January 1945 to rebuild bridges across the Rhine, further compromising an already war-ravaged forest. [18] In Provence meanwhile, French authorities struggled to meet US demands for wood. *Départements* were asked to supply the American army with 30,000 steres of firewood between 1 October 1944 and 31 March 1945, while the

[16] Becton and Maunder, 'Military Forestry in France after 1944,' 39-43.
[17] Bennett identifies a similar situation in the Solomon Islands, where the Allies squeezed as much from the forest as the Japanese had done before them. See 'Local Resource Use,' 107.
[18] CACAN 19880470/172 Volmerange, Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Lille, 'Possibilité par volume des forêts françaises,' 28 June 1947.

Drôme was to supply 3,500 steres. [19] As if to increase these demands on the forest. French army units required 24,840 steres of firewood and wood for baking bread. [20]

Continued fighting on the Franco-Italian border created further problems. A forestry inspector in the Alpes-Maritimes reported that the *département* was unable to meet Allied demands for this very reason. [21] It seems that when local supplies were unable to meet their needs, US troops helped themselves to 'large quantities' of firewood without regularising the situation. Repeating the behaviour of German officers, some US commanders apparently refused to reveal their identity to foresters. [22]

As during German and Italian occupation, the presence of French and Allied troops inhibited forestry production and harmed the forest. For instance, firing practice conducted by the French 57th infantry regiment hampered production and damaged forestry cables at St-Martin-Vésible in the Alpes-Maritimes, activity which risked having 'regrettable repercussions on the general economy,' according to the local Forestry Inspector. [23] And on 10 March 1945, a fire started during a shooting exercise conducted by the US army damaged a recently reforested plantation in the Alpes-Maritimes. The local forestry official could not understand why a forest had been chosen for the practice rather than a patch of 'bare ground.' He asked that US

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[19] ADBDR 194 W 27 Comité central des Groupements Interprofessionnels Forestiers, to Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Aix-en-Provence, 24 October 1944; and ADD 61 W 6 Inspecteur général des Eaux et Forêts, Répartiteur, Chef de la Section du Bois par interim, to Préfet de la Drôme, 'Prélèvement de bois de chauffage par les armées alliées,' 7 November 1944.

[20] ADBDR 194 W 27 B. Lazard Répartiteur, Chef de la Section du Bois, to Directeur régional de la Production forestière, Marseille, 'Circulaire No. 123: besions en bois de chauffage et bois de boulange de l'Armée française,' 30 November 1944.

[21] ADBDR 194 W 27 P. Herve, Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Nice, to Conservateur des Eaux et forêts, Aix-en-Provence, 10 February 1945.

[22] ADBDR 194 W 27 Directeur de la Production forestière to Secrétaire Général du Comité Central des Groupements Interprofessionels Forestiers, 15 February 1945.

[23] ADAM 521 W 26 Caubel, Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Nice-Est, 'Difficultés d'exploitation du fait des exercises militaires, 2 August 1945.

troops be made aware of the risk of forest fires in order to preserve the forests that had suffered so recently at the hands of occupation troops and wartime overexploitation. All must now be done, he continued, to 'preserve those forests which remain.' [24]

Alongside these pressing military requirements, French civilians continued to rely heavily on the forest for fuel, particularly as it was not until July 1946 that coal production returned to prewar levels. [25] The wood shortages experienced during the Occupation continued well into the post-Liberation period, reflecting general material scarcities at this time in France and elsewhere. [26] If anything, trees became even more vital to the national economy after 1944. Wood, according to Marcel Leloup, the Forestry Administration's Director General, was now even more essential than during the Occupation; 'more than ever wood currently constitutes the key material of the national economy; the war effort, coal mines, railways, housing for the needy (*sinistrés*), industrial and domestic heating, paper fabrication, tanning leather, all depend on it.' [27]

Civilian pressures on the forest were intense. Not least, the reconstruction of urban areas required vast quantities of timber. Raoul Dautry, the Minister for Reconstruction and Urbanism, had high aims for reconstruction; 'we must give

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[24] ADAM 521 W 57 Bergogne, Inspecteur-Adjoint intérimaire des Eaux et Forêts to Commission des Reboisements des Alpes-Maritimes, 'Rapport: incendie du 10 mars 1945,' 12 March 1945.

[25] Kedward, *La Vie en bleu*, 351.

[26] These material shortages led to frustrations; in July 1945 the Under-Prefect of Arles reported that with regards to food supplies and reconstruction public opinion still 'wanted a "better" [situation] which has still not arrived.' ADBDR 150 W 190 Sous-Préfet de l'Arrondissement d'Arles to Préfet des Bouches-du-Rhône, 'Rapport Mensuel,' 10 July 1945. For more on material shortages in post-Liberation France and Europe, see Michel-Pierre Chélin, 'La crise du ravitaillement en Europe, 1944-1949,' in Barjot *et al*, *Les reconstructions en Europe*, 159-160; Jean-Marie Guillon, *La Libération du Var: résistance et nouveaux pouvoirs* (Paris: Cahiers de l'IHTP, no. 5, June 1990), 110-1; and Vinen, *Unfree French*, 357.

[27] ADI 6 P 1/22 Directeur-Général des Eaux et Forêts to Conservateurs Régionaux des Eaux et Forêts, 14 November 1944.

France a noble face [and] reconstruct in the spirit of our time and respect for the past with the solid materials found on our soil.'[28] However, there were insufficient quantities of timber on French soil. As a report on reconstructing the Vercors highlighted, the problems facing reconstruction were the same from Lille to Marseille, namely the lack of raw materials, including wood. [29]

Figure 1. Makeshift sawmill at Vassieux-en-Vercors. CHAN 307 AP 171, undated photo.

In particular, during the early stages of the reconstruction process, there was a pressing demand for timber to construct the wooden barracks used to shelter those

[28] Raoul Dautry, 'Preface,' Services Topographiques du Ministère de la Reconstruction et de l'Urbanisme, *Répartition des destructions de guerre: historique* (Institut Géographique National, October 1945).
[29] ADD 943 W 13 Commission de Reconstruction économique de la Drôme, 'Reconstruction économique de la Drôme, reconstruction du Vercors (rapport sur la visite de 8 Novembre), [n.d.].

who had lost their homes during combat or bombing raids. [30] France's railway operator, the SNCF, also required wood to repair its tracks that that had been damaged during the war (in September 1947 it still needed to replace 900,000 sleepers), as well as wood for tools and carriages. [31] Given these demands, the government ordered the production of 8,500,000m^3 of construction-grade timber and 22,000,000 steres of fire- and industry-grade wood between 30 June 1945 and 30 June 1946. [32] Although by 1946 production of construction-grade timber had increased by forty two percent (from prewar figures of 7,380,000m^3 to 10,511,502m^3), it seems likely that before this date the forestry industry would have struggled to match this rate, given the severity of transport and manpower shortages (detailed below). [33] Indeed, officials in charge of reconstruction pressed for a thirty percent increase in wood production for 1946 and 1947, which suggests that existing supplies and rates of production were not meeting the demands of reconstruction. [34]

As well as the demand for the wood that was vital to rebuild France's cities, reconstruction in the countryside also relied on access to timber resources. In the Vercors, timber was needed to rebuild houses, farms, bridges, and barracks for

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[30] As Clout notes, 'many Parisians endured the exceptionally harsh winter of 1947 – and many subsequent winters – living or working in draughty and often under-heated wooden huts.' Clout, 'Ruins and Revival,' 127, 129.

[31] CACAN 198880470/172 Directeur Général des Eaux et Forêts to Directeurs Départementaux de la Production Forestière, 'Impositions de bois de sous rails,' 2 September 1947; and CACAN 198880470/172 Contrôleur Général, Chef du Service de la Production Forestière to Chefs de Circonscriptions et Directeurs Départementaux de la Production Forestière, 'Besoins de la SNCF en diverses essences feuillues pour fabrication spéciales' 14 May 1947.

[32] H.B., 'Mobilisation des ressources forestiers,' *Le Bois National*, 8th Year, No. 4, 5 February 1946, 53-6.

[33] The figures come from *Rivières et Forêts: numéro spécial consacré aux Eaux et Forêts et au tourisme cynegétique et halieatique*, Nos. 10-12 (January-March 1949), 24-5.

[34] CHAN 307 AP 171 Direction des Materieux, Transports et Constructions Provisoires, 'Note pour Monsieur le Ministre: approvisionnenment en bois pour 1946,' 10 January 1946.

forestry workers, as well as for erecting emergency shelters for those made homeless by the war and constructing a canteen for reconstruction workers. [35]

Figure 2. Temporary wooden bridge at Goule Noire, Vercors. CHAN 307 AP 171, undated photo.

The quantities of wood needed were not insignificant. The village of St-Julien-en-Vercors alone requested 1, 200m^3 of resinous wood for reconstruction in March 1945. [36]

The Vercors' resistance and subsequent "martyrdom" were used as a bargaining chip on at least one occasion in an attempt to secure more resources. In December 1944, the President of the Comité d'aide et de reconstruction du Vercors

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[35] ADD 122 W 1 Juge, Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Valence, 'Rapport: Forêt de St Martin, affouge, partage sur pied,' 9 March 1945; ADD 122 W 1 Montagne, Inspecteur-Adjoint des Eaux et Forêts, Valence, 'Rapport: bois d'urgence,' 10 January 1945; ADD 122 W 1 Juge, Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Valence, 'Rapport: cession amiable, bois de chauffage – M.R.U.,' 15 December 1945; ADD 122 W 1 Lucien Coudor, Préfet de la Drôme, 'Arrêté,' 28 May 1945; and Tenant, *Vercors*, 209.
[36] ADD 122 W 1 Juge, 'Forêt de St-Julien-en-Vercors.'

wrote to the Prefect of the Isère requesting that forests in the Vercors be exempt from supplying wood for paper pulp as 'the exceptional situation' of the massif meant that its inhabitants were struggling to supply themselves with wood, let alone contribute to the rest of France's needs. [37] The Forestry Conservator in Grenoble appears to have had little sympathy with the request that the Vercors' recent "martyrdom" justified its exclusion from contributing to national wood stocks. He even suggested that this was yet another excuse from forest owners who have 'always' tried to escape their obligations to the wider community. [38]

Figure 3. Rebuilding a roof in the Vercors. CHAN 307 AP 171, undated photo.

[37] ADI 6 P 1/22 Président du Comité d'aide et de reconstruction du Vercors to Préfet de l'Isère, 7 December 1944.
[38] ADI 6 P 1/22 Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Grenoble, to Préfet de'l Isère, 5 January 1945.

At other times, however, there was a more cooperative relationship between foresters and the Vercors, with the forestry administration donating unsold wood to the Comité d'aide et la reconstruction du Vercors and conducting the *martelage* (marking of trees with a hammer) for a timber cut from which the profits were to go towards alleviating the plight of St-Martin-en-Vercors' prisoners of war and deportees. [39]

High levels of timber felling did not pass unopposed. In May 1947, residents of Flayosquet in the Var wrote to the Forestry Conservator in Nice to protest that a newly arrived forest owner was conducting a 'veritable massacre' of oak trees in the hamlet. The disgruntled population believed that these oaks (some of which were as thick as a 'round table') were legendary in the area and may have formed part of the 'ancient, original forest' of Provence. Although they understood the demands of reconstruction, they wondered why their picturesque forest was being targeted instead of other, less attractive woodlands in the area. As a consequence of this felling, 'the most beautiful site' in the area had been reduced to bare rocks and resembled 'the threadbare spine of a mangy dog.' What, they wondered, was the Commission des sites et du reboisement doing to stop the felling? [40] In response, the Forestry Administration highlighted that the trees had been marked for felling in 1943, although it had asked the forest owner to halt the exploitation as it was unclear

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[39] ADD 122 W 1 Juge, Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Valence, 'Rapport: forêt de bureau de bienfaisance de St-Martin-en-Vercors, non soumis au régime forestier, vente de coupe,' 9 March 1945; Juge, Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Valence, 'Rapport: commune de Vassieux-en-Vercors, cession amiable, Service de la Reconstruction,' 7 September 1945.

[40] ADAM 521 W 74 'Un groupe de Falyosquais to Conservator des Eaux et Forêts, Nice, 7 May 1947.

why these particular trees had been selected. [41] Although this is an isolated case, it points to persisting tensions between forest conservation and production in post-Liberation France.

The shortfall in forestry production

As during the Occupation period, forestry production struggled to meet demand after Liberation. In November 1944, Leloup recognised the dire situation: 'although the needs of the country for wood have never been more pressing than at the current moment, we are witnessing incontestable signs of a weakening of forestry production.' [42] There were numerous reasons for the slackening of production. For a start, the military conflict and social upheavals of the Liberation period played a role in disrupting forestry production. To take one example, a September 1944 report from the Isère noted that due to recent 'events' it was hard for officials to assess the state of firewood stocks, felling had been halted, and sawmills had slowed their production. [43] To make matters worse, *maquisards* and regular French army units requisitioned forestry vehicles, which increased transportation problems that were already considerable. [44]

To address the lack of forestry vehicles, Leloup asked Prefects and Commissaires régionaux de la République (de Gaulle's regional representatives) to

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[41] ADAM 521 W 74 Rougon, Inspecteur-principal des Eaux et Forêts, Draguignan, 'Rapport: exploitation de la forêt particulière Samaran à Flaysosquet, protestation collective.' 4 June 1947.
[42] ADBDR 194 W 25 Directeur-Général des Eaux et Forêts to Conservators des Eaux et Forêts, 'Intensification de la production forestière,' 7 November 1944.
[43] ADI 2101 W 29 Office départemental du Commerce et de la Distribution des Bois de Feu, 'Bois de feu,' 9 September 1944
[44] Ibid; and ADI 6 P1/22 Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts to Préfet de l'Isère, 5 October 1944.

divert draught animals that had been requisitioned by German authorities (but not yet returned to their owners) to be deployed in the forest. In making this request, Leloup stressed the importance of getting timber out of the forest to provide pit props which were essential for 'restarting the economic life of the country.' [45] Damage to transport infrastructure represented another obstacle to be overcome. For instance, the blockage of the Col de Rousset tunnel deprived the town of Die of the wood supplies that it normally received from the Vercors, as well as potatoes and dairy products. [46]

Besides transport, other factors, such as dilapidated sawmills and general material shortages, exacerbated the situation. [47] Private foresters also accused the government of not paying enough attention to the forestry sector, even though it was of 'vital interest for [France's] reconstruction,' and manpower shortages continued to pose problems. [48] The Forestry Conservator in the Isère identified a lack of workers as one of the main factors holding back production, meaning that it was difficult to maintain, let alone intensify the supply of forestry products. As a consequence, the Prefect allowed the conservator to requisition the necessary 'goods and personnel' to 'assure maximum production in the forestry camps.' [49] Other short term measures also came into effect. In Normandy, relief worker Francesca Wilson

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[45] ADBDR 150 W 187 Marcel LeLoup, Directeur-Général des Eaux et Forêts to Commissaires régionaux de la République, Préfets, 'Affectation à la production forestière des animaux de trait récupérés sur l'ennemi,' 13 November 1944.
[46] ADD 943 W 13 Sous-Préfet de Die to Préfet de la Drôme, 26 October 1945.
[47] Becton and Maunder, 'Military Forestry in France after 1944,' 39-41.
[48] 'Nous ne sommes pas contents...' *La forêt du Sud-Est*, 1st Year, No. 3., 10 July 1946, 1. For manpower shortages, see ADBDR 194 W 31 Contrôleur Juré Bartoli, 'Rapport no. 47, période du 17 au 27 janvier 1945,' 30 January 1945.
[49] ADI 6 P 1/22 Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Grenoble to Préfet de l'Isère, 3 November 1944; and Préfect de l'Isère, 'Arrêté,' 16 November 1944.

recalled seeing German prisoners of war busy felling trees for firewood 'because of the lack of coal.' [50]

At Saint-Martin-Vésubie in the Alpes-Maritimes, tensions arose due to an inability to recuperate existing wood supplies. In the summer of 1945, forestry officials struggled to bring down 15,000m^3 of timber cut by Italians during their occupation of the *département* that now lay unused on high-altitude mountain slopes (the timber had already spent two winters on the slopes so risked deterioration if left any longer). Hampering their efforts were landmines laid by German and American troops, unauthorised firing practice conducted by French soldiers, a lack of manpower, and time-consuming negotiations over the price of the timber. [51] An article in *L'Aurore du Sud-Est* on August 1945 demanded that progress be made as the wood was urgently needed for reconstruction. The newspaper was also concerned that the cut timber would prevent water from draining off the slopes, thereby undermining the forest's sustainability and leading to landslides. [52] Although this was an exceptional incident, it suggests the strain that the Forestry Administration was working under and the urgency of maximising forestry production and distribution.

Local authorities struggled to control the situation. In the face of severe wood shortages, the Prefect of the Drôme ordered, on 7 August 1945, that

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[50] Francesca M. Wilson, *Aftermath: France, Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia 1945 and 1946* (West Drayton: Penguin, 1947), 20.

[51] ADAM 521 W 26 Caubel, Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Nice-Est, 'Rapport: vente de grumes abandonées par des exploitants italiens,' 1 May 1945; ADAM 521 W 26 Caubel, Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Nice-Est, 'Rapport: bois abandonné par l'ennemi dans le département des Alpes-Maritimes,' 21 June 1945; and ADAM 521 W 26 Caubel, Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Nice-Est, 'Difficultés d'exploitation du fait des exercises militaires,' 2 August 1945.

[52] 'Pour éviter une catastrophe... il faut utiliser le bois entassé à Saint-Martin-Vésubie,' *L'Aurore du Sud-Est*, 30 Augst 1945, newspaper clipping in ADAM 521 W 26.

communes were to provide firewood for schools, bakers, and refugees living on their territory. If need be, they should requisition wood from private foresters. [53] Before this date, it appears that communes in the Drôme were experiencing difficulties in securing wood from forest owners. One forester even suggested that bread should be withheld from reticent forest owners, while some blamed the temptations of the black market for wood distribution problems. [54] Others targeted local mayors; according to the Forestry Conservator in Valence, wood shortages in towns remained low because town halls were not taking a sufficiently active role in obtaining supplies. [55] Another forestry official recommended withholding tobacco and sugar supplies from two communes which had claimed that they were not in a position to supply firewood to urban areas. [56]

The scarcity of firewood was felt keenly by certain individuals. For instance, a disgruntled refugee from Toulon wrote to the Drôme's prefect in December 1944 complaining that he had not received enough firewood from his local town hall. As a consequence, he would now have no choice but to endure winter without adequate heating 'in a far fresher climate than that of the Mediterranean.' [57] Yet despite the prefectoral decree of August 1945, it seems that such shortages persisted. For instance, the mayor of Erôme resorted to asking parents to donate wood to keep the

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[53] ADD 61 W 7 Préfet de la Drôme, 'Arrêté: imposition de bois de feu pour l'exercise 1945-1946,' 7 August 1945.
[54] ADD 61 W 7 Maire de Savasse to Préfet de la Drôme, 20 December 1944; ADD 61 W 7 Pondu, Inspecteur-Adjoint des Eaux et Forêts, Montelimar, 'Rapport: commune de Savasse, réclamations,' 15 February 1945; ADD 61 W 7 Cochet, Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Valence, 'Impositions communales: bois de chauffage,' 24 April 1945; ADD 60 W 14 Pondu, Inspecteur-Adjoint des Eaux et Forêts, Montelimar, 'Rapport: impositions en bois de feu,' 27 March 1945; and ADD 60 W 14 Pondu, Inspecteur-Adjoint des Eaux et Forêts, Montelimar, 'Rapport: communes de Port-Laval et Pont-de-Barret, réclamation pour l'imposition en bois de feu,' 12 December 1944.
[55] Cochet, 'Impositions communales: bois de chauffage.'
[56] ADD 60 W 14 Fondard, Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Die, 'Rapport: communes de Glandage et de St-Julien-en-Quint: impositions de bois de chauffage,' 13 November 1944.
[57] ADD 61 W 7 Jeanne-Marie Lespine to Préfet de la Drôme, 28 December 1944.

local school heated as the little firewood that existed in the commune had been 'almost totally cut down during the last five years.' [58] Similar problems arose in the neighbouring Isère *département* where, in March 1946, the Prefect urged mayors to 'do everything' within their means to extract as much firewood and bakers' wood as possible from their commune's resources. [59]

The cases of the Drôme and Isère are illustrative of the wider wood shortages identified by Leloup in November 1944 (see above). In the light of such scarcity, he, like local state foresters, highlighted the possibility that forest owners were deliberately holding back wood to speculate on prices or showed a 'reluctance' (*mauvaise volonté*) to meet the demands expected of them. [60]

France had one possibility, though, to alleviate shortfalls in timber supplies in the shape of the forests that lay in the French zone of occupation in Germany. Although France oversaw the smallest of the Allied occupation zones (comprising the South West regions of the Rhineland, Baden, and Württemberg), it nonetheless possessed considerable timber resources awaiting exploitation (not least those of the Black Forest). [61] One of the aims of the Allies in Germany was to reduce the country's capacity to wage war, an objective which informed their forestry policy. V.P. Rock, a US army lieutenant on the Allied Forestry Sub-Committee proposed a

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[58] ADD 61 W 7 Maire de Erôme to Préfet de la Drôme, 5 September 1945.
[59] ADI 2101 W 37 A. Reynier, Préfet de l'Isère to Maires de l'Isère, 12 March 1946.
[60] Directeur-Général des Eaux et Forêts to Conservateurs des Eaux et Forêts, 'Intensification de la production forestière'. For local reports see ADV 2 W 69 Président de la Chambre départementale des négociants détaillants en combustibles, 'Rapport à Monsieur le Sous-Préfet de Toulon concernant l'execution du plan de ravitaillement en bois de feu du mois de décembre,' 11 January 1945; and ADBDR 194 W 32 Section Bois de Boulagne des Bouches-du-Rhône to members of Comité du Ravitaillement, Représentants du Comité de Libération, 7 November 1944.
[61] The quantity of wood in the French zone was apparently three billion cubic metres, of which half was construction grade timber. CACAN 19880470/173 'Interview between General Noel and Colonel Altman,' 30 August 1945.

timber-felling regime that would destroy 'the war potential of the forests and forest industries of Germany,' allow for the 'systematic exploitation' of German forests over a twenty-year period, yet ensure that sufficient 'vegetative cover and density of stocking' remained so that 'dangers arising from erosion, floods, and lowering of the water level will not prevail.' Overall, 'the ultimate aim will be to reduce the forests to a point where they will no longer be a source of war materials.' [62] French forestry officials based in Germany agreed that the 'war potential' of German forests should be reduced and recognised that the timber needs for Allied reconstruction would 'very quickly absorb several supplementary [production] possibilities over the course of the occupation.' [63] Germany's forests offered a seemingly "win-win" situation for the Allies as they could simultaneously secure timber for their own countries' reconstruction and consume the raw materials that Germany could potentially use to wage war.

Unsurprisingly after their recent experience of German occupation, there was a feeling of revenge on the part of the French. [64] In 1947, the Minister for Agriculture observed how the German forests 'which had been specially saved to the detriment of our own' during the Occupation would now be used to satisfy France's

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[62] CACAN 19880470/173 V.P. Rock, Lt. Jg U.S.N.R., U.S. Secretary of Allied Control Authority Economic Directorate, Food and Agriculture Committee, Forestry Sub-Committee, 'German Forestry-Paper' SCFO/P (45) 2 [n.d.].

[63] CACAN 198804/173 Rodary, Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts to Inspecteur-Général des Eaux et Forêts, Berlin, 16 November 1945. The Soviets also concurred on the need to reduce the war potential of Germany's forests. See CACAN 19880470/173 Allied Control Authority Economic Directorate, Food and Agriculture Committee, Forestry Sub-Committee, 'Propositions of the Soviet Delegate on the order of exploitation of German Forests,' 22 November 1945. Eaux et Forêts also used game from German forests to restock France's reserves after the war. See 'Attributions sur le plan technique,' *Rivières et Forêts, Numéro Spécial consacré aux Eaux et Forêts et au tourisme cynegétique et halieatique*, Nos. 10-12 (January-March 1949), 39.

[64] A desire for revenge and compensation also influenced the Soviet occupation of Germany. See Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe*, 52.

timber needs. [65] Articles in *Le Bois National* noted how French lumberjacks based in Germany (whom the paper named 'the pioneers of reconstruction') would enable France to find some compensation 'for the immense ravages inflicted on the French forest' between 1940 and 1944. One commentator suggested that it was time for France to consider the war potential of Germany's forests alongside German forestry policies in occupied Europe and 'draw the conclusions' arising from 'these acts of barbarity.' The implication was that France should enjoy *carte blanche* to over-exploit German forests. [66]

However, France struggled to realise the production potential of the forests that lay on the other side of the Rhine. Although permits to exploit over four million cubic metres were issued, by August 1947 just under two and a half million cubic metres were actually produced. Furthermore, over half of this production had not yet reached France. [67] As in France itself, manpower and transport problems held back the production and transportation of desperately needed timber. In September 1947, a sawmill owner in the Marseille region complained that production in his mill was threatened because of a lack of timber. Yet despite his desperate situation, no one was able to tell him when timber supplies would arrive from Germany. [68] In addition, the Forestry Conservator in Aix-en-Provence noted that only three

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[65] CACAN 19771461/46 Ministre de l'Agriculture to Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, 'Organisation des Services Forestiers en Allemagne,' 21 April 1947. See also P. Romart, 'Échos d'outre-Rhin: les bois allemands de la zone d'occupation française,' *Le Bois National*, 8th Year, No. 30, 25 October 1947, 453-4.

[66] 'D'une décade à l'autre,' *Le Bois National*, 8th Year, No. 8, 15 March 1947, 118; and Échos d'outre-Rhin: les bois allemands de la zone d'occupation française,' *Le Bois National*, 8th Year, No. 31, 5 November 1947, 465.

[67] CACAN 198804/172 Directeur-Général des Eaux et Forêts to Directeurs départementales des Eaux et Forêts, 'Contrôle des livraisons de grumes à sciages en provenance de Z.F.O.,' Paris 21 October 1947.

[68] ADBDR 194 W 20 Lucien Tibaud et Cie to Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Aix-en-Provence, 6 September 1947.

businesses in the Bouches-du-Rhône had requested timber from Germany because the waiting time could not be guaranteed. [69] This inability to realise the full potential of German forestry resources alongside the demands of emergency reconstruction, the continuing reliance on wood for fuel, and the Allied forces' mobilisation of French forests testify to the continuing pressures on France's forests. These factors combined to make landmine clearance operations all the more urgent.

Déminage: removing the explosive traces of war

Déminage, or mine clearance, was a dangerous, difficult, yet essential task. It was only through the neutralising of these explosive traces of war that France could begin reconstruction. Although initial estimates of a hundred million mines were found to be excessive, the task of removing the thirteen million that were eventually found was no mean feat. In all, these mines covered one percent of national territory (or the equivalent of one administrative *département*). [70] Mines also drifted off the Mediterranean coast, causing problems for fishermen who were reluctant to abandon their fishing zones. [71] Initially, the military had responsibility for clearing strategic sites while the Ministry for Agriculture dealt with mines on civilian land. It was not until February 1945 that a centralised mine clearing organisation (the Direction de déminage) was created under the leadership of resistance veteran Raymond Aubrac. According to Danièle Voldman, Aubrac viewed mine clearance as a continuation of

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[69] ADBDR 194 W 20 Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Aix-en-Provence, to Direction des Exploitations en régie en Allemagne, 14 August, 1947.
[70] Voldman, *Déminage de France*, 11.
[71] ADAM 21 W 1 Préfet des Alpes-Maritimes to Maires des Alpes-Maritimes, 'Mines ramassées par les chalutiers,' 10 October 1947.

the fight against 'Nazi barbarity.' [72] In this sense, *déminage* was a way to restore French sovereignty and control over national territory after the humiliation of occupation.

Mine clearance was also an integral step in the attempt to increase agricultural, forestry, and industrial production. As the rationale behind the creation of the Direction de déminage recognised, 'the laying of mines and traps rends entire cities uninhabitable and vast expanses of land inaccessible and unproductive.' Mine clearance would return land and buildings to their 'primitive function,' allowing access to agricultural produce and the raw materials, such as timber, that were desperately needed for reconstruction. [73] In the words of the Direction de déminage's representative in the Alpes-Maritimes; 'it is obvious that reconstruction work can only be undertaken... once land has been cleared of mines.' [74] The Ministry of Reconstruction and Urbanism took the threat to agricultural interests seriously and gathered statistics on the surface area of mined agricultural land. As its figures show, it was the Mediterranean region that had the greatest number of hectares of mined farm land, even if it was Normandy's agricultural land that was proportionally the most mined (see figure four). Overall, the Bouches-du-Rhône held the dubious honour of being the most heavily mined *département.* [75]

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[72] Voldman, *Déminage de France*, 36-46.
[73] CHAN 307 AP 174 Minstre de la Reconstruction et de l'Urbanisme, 'Ordonnance no. 45-271 du 21 Février 1945 portant création d'une direction du déminage: exposé des motifs,' 22 February 1945.
[74] ADAM 163 W 32 Général Despas to Général Gerodias, Regional Déminage Representative for the Marseille region, 7 June 1945. Départemental Representatives possessed extensive powers, and were charged with establishing maps of mines fields, prioritising the area to be cleared, and controlling recruitment into déminage teams. See Voldman, *Déminage de France*, 63.
[75] Voldman, *Déminage en France*, 11.

Figure 4. Distribution of mined land

Region	Total mined area (in hectares)	Mined agricultural land (in hectares)
North	31, 000	15, 000
Normandy	42, 000	35, 000
Brittany	19, 600	10, 000
Atlantic (*Océan*)	16, 000	10, 000
Mediterranean	118, 000	50, 000
East (1)	68, 150	15, 000
East (2)	60, 500	35, 000
Total	**355, 850**	**170, 000**

Source: CHAN 307 AP 171 Communication from the Minister of Reconstruction and Urbanism, 'Situation actuelle du déminage en France,' October 1945.

Given the scale of the task, and its inherent dangers, the French government permitted the use of German prisoners of war in mine clearance operations (approximately 52,000 were used overall [76]). The legality of this decision was dubious, given that the terms of the Geneva convention stipulated that prisoners of war were not to be exposed to dangerous work. But France argued that the prisoners of war were well-trained (thereby reducing the risk of death or injury), and Aubrac justified their inclusion on the grounds that it allowed the Direction du déminage to finish its 'task as quickly as possible and turn mined land back to production.' [77] Yet there was also a sense that French lives were worth more than German ones. One French soldier in the Alpes-Maritimes urged that German prisoners be deployed as 'it is natural to make [them] carry out the most perilous missions,' as it spares as many French lives as possible. [78] This point of view was apparently shared by others. The Comité de Libération of the Alpes-Maritimes requested that

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[76] Ibid. 92.
[77] CHAN 307 AP 171 Raymond Aubrac, Commissaire de la République, Directeur du déminage to Réprésentants Départementaux et Régionaux du Déminage, 'Emploi à des travaux autres que le déminage des prisonniers de guerre affectés au déminage' 25 October 1945. In all, approximately 52,000 German PoWs were used for mine clearance. In 1949 the Geneva Convention was revised to explicitly exclude PoWs from mine clearance. See Voldman, *Déminage de France*, 89-94.
[78] ADAM 163 W 32 Lt-Colonel Barli, Commandant la Subdivision des Alpes-Maritime to Chef du Service Départemental du Déminage, 'Personnel de déminage' 28 April 1945

collaborators and veterans of Vichy's hated *milice* work alongside German prisoners of war to clear mines. [79]

The mine clearance operations exposed the continuing importance placed on cultivated land after Liberation. The Direction du déminage determined the order in which land was to be cleared in an instruction issued on 25 February 1945, which placed cultivated land as one of the top priorities, alongside transport, communications, industrial installations, and public property 'essential for national life.' Next came factories and workshops that supported agriculture, food supplies, and the 'revival of economic life,' followed by private houses. Pleasure gardens, luxury industries, unexploited forests, and uncultivated land came last. [80]

However, as *déminage* officials in Provence emphasised, the distinction between cultivated and uncultivated land was 'often difficult' to make. Heathland, for example, was frequently classified as uncultivated land even though it could equally serve as pasture for animals. [81] It is unclear exactly where exploitable forests came on this list of priorities, but it is certain that they were prioritised above unproductive forests. Leloup stressed that the Forestry Administration needed to clear mines 'as quickly as possible' from forests mined during the German retreat.

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[79] ADAM 163 W 32 Comité de Libération des Alpes-Maritimes, 'Séance du 29 septembre 1944, décision,' 30 September 1944.

[80] ADAM 163 W 32 Raoul Dautry, Ministère de la Reconstruction et de l'Urbanisme, 'Note générale aux délégués départementaux,' 18 April 1945. On a local level, this pattern was followed in the Camargue, where cultivated soil was cleared before 'idle land.' Sous-Préfet de l'Arrondissement d'Arles to Préfet des Bouches-du-Rhône, 'Rapport Mensuel.'

[81] ADVAU 1042 W 655 Reynaud, Ingénieur en Chef Régional du Génie Rural, Ct. Dumont, Chef Régional du Service du Déminage, 'Organisation du déminage dans la section de Marseille, 15 December 1944.

Areas where felling contributed directly to the 'immediate necessities of forestry production' were to be cleared first. [82]

Not only high-ranking officials stressed the immediate necessity of mine clearance. Local communities demanded that their land be rendered accessible and productive. In October 1944, the under-prefect in Toulon noted that 'diverse communes had brought to [his] attention the necessity to start clearing mines from cultivated land,' using German prisoners of war. [83] Likewise, the Camargue town of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer urgently wanted mines removed as they represented 'a serious danger for the population and a major obstacle from the point of view of food supplies.' [84] Arles town hall also expressed its concern that 'the presence of mines literally ruins farmers' and other landowners, who faced the eventual 'disappearance' of their untended crops and plantations. [85]

At times, agriculture and forestry were placed on a similar level of urgency. The town hall of Bollène-Vésubie in the Alpes-Maritimes recognised that mines 'gravely compromised' both agricultural and forestry interests in the commune. Mines, it argued, must be cleared to avoid the 'total loss of dairy and forestry products.' [86] Mines threatened other local economic interests. In May 1945, the Syndicat d'initiative at Napoule Plage (near Cannes) called for beaches to be cleared

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[82] ADHA 1043 W 64 Marcel Leloup, Directeur-Général des Eaux et Forêts to Conservateurs des Eaux et Forêts, 24 March 1945.
[83] ADV 2 W 59 Sous-Préfet de Toulon to Maires de la zone cotière de l'arrondissement de Toulon, 21 October 1944.
[84] ADBDR 150 W 174 Sous-Préfet de l'Arrondissement d'Arles to Préfet des Bouches-du-Rhône, 29 September 1944.
[85] ADBDR 150 W 174 Mairie d'Arles 'Extrait des délibérations de la délégation spéciale, séance du 30 décembre 1944, no. 31 voeu tendant au déminage rapide des terrains de la commune d'Arles.'
[86] ADAM 163 W 32 Mairie de la Bollène-Vésubie, 'Extrait du registre des délibérations du conseil municipal, séance 13 mai 1945: déminage des terrains communaux.' [n.d].

ahead of the anticipated return of tourists during the forthcoming summer. [87] Removing the explosive remnants of war, for whatever reason, was a politically sensitive issue. Dautry advised *départemental* delegates of the Direction de déminage to make sure that local mayors 'calmed the legitimate impatience' of their populations who desperately wanted their land to be cleared. [88]

Nature was not a neutral backdrop for *déminage*, and the ease and speed of mine clearance operations were, in part, dictated by topography and vegetation. In the Hérault *département*, mine clearance was relatively easy as the minefields were well-signalled and located on land largely free from 'invasive vegetation.' [89] Elsewhere, however, mine clearance was, in words of the Alpes-Maritimes *départemental* representative for mine clearance, 'thankless work (*travail ingrat*).' [90] The type of terrain actively contributed to the ease or difficulty of detecting and removing mines. As a mine clearance official in the Alpes-Maritimes pointed out, 'it is obvious that to clear mines in land covered with tall grasses and bushes is practically impossible. Unfortunate experiences have taught us the dangers that this brings, [a lesson] reinforced by our death and injury lists.' [91] Trees, bushes, and grasses sometimes had to be burnt back to enable mine clearance, an activity that

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[87] ADAM 163 W 32 Syndicat d'initiative, Napoule Plage, to Préfet des Alpes-Maritimes, 14 May 1945.
[88] Dautry, 'Note générale aux délégués départementaux.'
[89] CHAN 307 AP 167 R. Thevenot, Ingénieur du Génie Rural, 'Déminage: journée de documentation du 26 janvier 1946 à Montpellier, rapport confidential,' [n.d.].
[90] ADAM 163 W 32 Représentant Départemental du Déminage des Alpes-Maritimes to Préfet des Alpes-Maritimes, 'Situation générale du déminage,' [n.d.].
[91] ADAM 163 W 32 Représentant Départemental du Service du Déminage des Alpes-Maritimes to G. Lahillonne, Sous-Préfet chargé de mission affaires économiques, 4 September 1944.

could be resented by the local community who saw their valued trees and crops going up in smoke. [92]

Mine detection and clearance was perhaps hardest in areas of *maquis* and other scrubland. Photographs taken by the *départemental* representative for *déminage* in the Landes testify to the difficulties involved in detecting mines in the undergrowth (figure five). The caption to one photograph explained how *démineurs* tentatively checked a 'very dense' undergrowth of brush, bracken, and heather, which could only be done 'slowly, by hand.' Another caption stressed how the clearance of one particular minefield was made 'very difficult due to the bumpy relief of the terrain and the luxuriant bushy vegetation.' [93]

Figure 5. German prisoners of war checking the undergrowth for undetected mines after a mine clearance operation. CHAN 307 AP 174 Jean Renard, 'Département des Landes,'[n.d.].

[92] Ibid.; and ADAM 163 W 32 Les Propriétaires des terrains minés de la Route de Castellar à Menton, to Préfet des Alpes-Maritimes [n.d.].
[93] CHAN 307 AP 174 Jean Renard, Représentant Départemental du Déminage des Landes, 'Département des Landes,'[n.d.].

In Provence, unexploded ordinance was discovered in the Beaume Sournière valley, in November 1953, an area covered in *maquis*, where the 'prickly' and 'inextricable' vegetation had made it 'materially impossible to uncover' the munitions. The *maquis* was burnt away to allow for the explosives' destruction, but even after this measure munitions continued to crop up (an occurrence which was partly blamed on the 'negligence' of the *déminage* company). [94] As this case shows, according to terrain and vegetation, it was difficult to confirm that a mine removal operation had been successful. On certain sites, where it was 'impossible to certify that a terrain has been completely cleared,' mines could lie hidden in a forest or buried in the soil and grenades popped up 'in the most unexpected places.' [95]

Déminage operations in forests were particularly hard to verify. Before timber felling took place, herds of sheep were sometimes driven through forests to detect any unexploded mines that had remained undiscovered after a mine clearance operation. As a town hall official in Bréil-sur-Roya explained to the Prefect of the Alpes-Maritimes, sheep 'can be very useful for us by exploding those individual mines which escaped the checks of the *démineurs*.' [96] Foresters in the Haute-Alpes realised that farmers would be reluctant to donate their sheep for such a perilous mission, although one suggested that this was because the animals would become

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[94] ADBDR 148 W 411 Colonel Gerome to Secrétaire d'État à la guerre, 'Désobusage du terrain de démolition du vallon de Beaume Sounière,' 14 November 1952; ADBDR 148 W 411 Sous-Préfet d'Aix-en-Provence to Préfet des Bouches-du-Rhône, 'A/s des propositions de l'autorité militaire de nettoyer le vallon de Beaume Sournière des engins explosifs s'y trouvant,' 18 February 1953; ADBDR 148 W 411 Capitaine de Frégate Michel, Commandant le Batallion de Marins-Pompiers de Marseille, Inspecteur départemental des Services d'incendie, 'Incinération de l'ex-dépôt de munitions de Beaume Sournière,' 9 October 1954; and ADBDR 148 W 411 Sous-Préfet d'Aix-en-Provence to Préfet des Bouches-du-Rhône, 'Incinération de l'ex-dépôt de munitions de Beaume Sournière.' 10 November 1954.

[95] ADAM 163 W 32 Représentant Départemental du Déminage des Alpes-Maritimes to Prefect of the Alpes-Maritimes, 'Situation générale du déminage.'

[96] ADAM 163 W 32 M. Botton, Président de la Délégation Spéciale de Bréil-sur-Roya to Préfet des Alpes-Maritimes, 16 July 1945.

tired, thereby overlooking the more obvious and lethal danger posed by unexploded mines. [97] It may indeed have been difficult to secure "sacrificial lambs" in sufficient numbers. In at least one case a prisoner of war detachment was dispatched instead of a flock of sheep, suggesting that they were viewed as being more dispensable than the animals. [98]

Yet despite these measures, it was difficult to guarantee that forests had been successfully cleared. In the late 1940s and early 1950s foresters and other officials reported that the continued existence of mines and other explosives strewn through their forests represented an obvious danger for public safety. [99] In the state forest of Villers-Cotterêts (in the Picardie region) where the German forces had maintained an explosives depot, a forester noted that explosives hidden under the fallen leaves of successive autumns proved difficult to locate. He feared that in one or two years' time the explosives would be undetectable, making the forest 'extremely dangerous for walkers and workers.'[100] Elsewhere, a forestry conservator reported a fatal accident near La Rochelle, and, even in the 1960s, explosives continued to be uncovered in certain forests.[101]

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[97] ADHA 1043 W 64 Tinchant, Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Barcelonnette, 'Opérations complémentaires de déminage,' 19 October 1945.

[98] ADHA 1043 W 64 Tinchant, Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Barcelonnette, 'Opérations complémentaires de déminage,' 15 May 1945.

[99] See, for example, ADV 1790 W 47 Brigadier des Eaux et Forêts to Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Draguignan, 13 November 1945; ADV 1790 W 47 Directeur-Général des Eaux et Forêts to Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Nice, 'Déminage,' 31 October 1945; and ADV 1790 W 47 Préfet du Var to Maires du Var, Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Nice, Ingénieur en Chef des Ponts et Chaussées, Draguignan, Commandant de Gendarmerie, Draguignan, 30 August 1949.

[100] CACAN 19771615/77 Inspecteur-Principal des Eaux et Forêts, Villers-Cotterêts, to Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Compiègne, 28 February 1949.

[101] CACAN 19771615/77 Vinconneau, Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Niort, 'Rapport: déminage de la forêt dominale de la Courbe (ex-poche de Royon),' 4 February 1949; ADV 1790 W 47 Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, 'Note de service: explosives et engins de guerre,' 7 February 1962. Explosives from World War One continue to crop up and cause problems. See Jon Henley, 'Mine

In addition, forests were damaged during mine clearance operations as some became sites at which to destroy live explosives found elsewhere. [102] The Forestry Conservator in Rouen lamented that those plantations 'that were still intact at the end of the war are today riddled with shrapnel from such explosions.' The situation was particularly frustrating for the conservator as 'uncultivated land' elsewhere in the region could have been used for the explosions. [103]

On the whole, however, removing mines and other explosives from French soil was a largely successful operation. Proportionally, most minefields were cleared in 1945, suggesting that placing the *déminage* operation under centralised state control was an astute move. [104] Alongside the mine clearance operations, other defensive installations were removed, including barbed wire, poles, sea defences, and concrete pyramids blocking river mouths. [105] In all, 653,978 coastal defences had been removed by 1949, as well as the destruction of 17,459,191 diverse projectiles, and the unearthing of 56,572 bombs. [106] Landing strips and aerodromes were also demilitarised during this time and returned to agricultural land. [107] Yet

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clearance teams move in after first world war grenades found in French park, *The Guardian*, 27 July 2005, 15.

[102] See, for instance, ADBDR 148 W 411 Maire du Rove to Préfet des Bouches-du-Rhône, 12 July 1947; ADBDR 148 W 411 Capitaine de Frégate Brue, Commandant le batallion de marins-pompiers de Marseille, Inspecteur départemental des Services d'incendie to Préfet des Bouches-du-Rhône, 'Explosifs au quartier St-Tronc à Marseille,' 5 June 1953.

[103] CACAN 19771615/77 Lesage, Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Rouen, 'Rapport: destruction des engins de guerre en forêts dominales,' 29 October 1948.

[104] Voldman, *Déminage de France*, 129.

[105] ADAM 163 W 32 Représentant Départemental du Déminage des Alpes-Maritimes to Prefect of the Alpes-Maritimes, 'Compte-rendu des operations de déminage,' 14 November 1945; and Représentant Départemental du Déminage des Alpes-Maritimes to Prefect of the Alpes-Maritimes, 'Situation générale du déminage.'

[106] Voldman, *Déminage de France*, 129.

[107] CHAN F^{10} 7101 Ingénieur en chef du Génie Rural to Préfet des Bouches-du-Rhône, 'Démolition de pistes d'aviation dans la région de Salon,' 18 March 1946; CHAN F^{10} 7101 Ministre des Travaux Publics et des Transports to Ministre de l'Agriculture, 'Demande de levée des réquisitions faites sur les terrains de la commune de Lancon (Bouches-du-Rhône),' 6 June 1946; R. Dubois, Ingénieur en

there was a human cost to pay; between 1944 and 1950. approximately 471 French *démineurs* and 738 prisoners of war lost their lives, while a further 738 French *déminuers* and 2,988 prisoners of war were injured. [108]

The mines, other military installations, and combat-related environmental modifications had covered vast swathes of the French countryside. [109] Removing these physical and explosive traces of warfare allowed productivity to return incrementally to fields and forests, an essential step towards meeting the high demand for natural resources in the years following Liberation and preparing land for reconstruction.

Planning for reconstruction

Assessing war damage in order to plan for reconstruction began before 1944. During the Occupation, both the Vichy regime and resistance movements had begun to calculate war-related damage to agricultural land, forests, and the built environment. In 1941, Vichy created the Service national des statistiques to assess war damage, while Vergeot and Aubé prepared a clandestine report on the evolution

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chef du Génie Rural to Houdet, Inspecteur-Général des Eaux et du Génie Rural, 'Construction des fermes sinistrées de la commune de Bernes, 15 October 1949.

[108] Voldman, *Déminage de France*, 129.

[109] Military installations and aerodromes, as well as floods provoked for defensive purposes (such as the Camargue's submersion) had rendered unusable a further 304,114 hectares of land. Vergeot and Aubé, *Rapport sur le problème agricole français*, 50. In addition, there lay seventy million cubic metres of rubble to clear and eighty million cubic metres of trenches and bomb craters to fill in. Commission consultative des dommages et des réparations, *Dommages subis par la France et l'union française du fait de la guerre et de l'occupation ennemie (1939-1945)* (Imprimerie Nationale, 1951), 10 vols, Vol. 1., xxii.

of the French countryside for the Minister for Foreign Affairs. [110] Yet after Liberation, state officials invested more time and effort in assessing the material impacts of war, to prepare the ground for reconstruction and seek reparations from Germany. On 21 October 1944 the Commission du coût de l'occupation was created to calculate the reparations that Germany owned France, a body which later evolved into the Commission consultative des dommages et des reparations (CCDR), which was attached to the President's office.[111] The CCDR's findings presented a grim picture of a war-torn landscape. France's agricultural sector had experienced damages to harvests, property, and farmland, as well as suffering German and Italian requisitions and more general war-related dilapidation (see chapter two).

Yet despite difficulties in accurately assessing war damage to the countryside, the level of destruction resulted in the government formulating plans to reconstruct the environment. After 1945 the agricultural sector was transformed by increased specialisation, mechanisation, greater reliance on pesticides and fertilizers, and the breaking up of the traditional field system. As a result, agricultural production and yields rocketed, even though the number of agricultural workers dropped sharply. [112] Agricultural modernisation formed part of the state-led reconstruction and productivity drive, which economist Jean Fourastié has memorably termed '*les trente glorieuses*,' the thirty years of unprecedented growth and modernisation from 1946 to 1975, during which living standards and levels of

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[110] Voldman, *Reconstruction des villes françaises*, 26-7; and Vergeot and Aubé, *Rapport sur le problème agricole français: données et solutions*.
[111] Voldman, *Reconstruction des villes françaises*, 26-7.
[112] See Jean Fourastié, *Les trente glorieuses ou la révolution invisible de 1946 à 19*75 (Paris: Fayard, 1979), 208; Pitte, *Histoire du paysage français*, 340-4; Kedward, *La Vie en bleu*, 350-1; and de Planhol and Claval, *Historical Geography of France*, 444-9. For cultural anxiety over the passing of the old agricultural way of life see Bess, *Light-Green Society*, 38-53.

material comfort rose enormously. [113] Less documented, however, are the plans advanced for the modernisation of the forest.

In an era of state-led reconstruction devised along productivist and interventionist lines, the upper echelons of the Forestry Administration proposed that the state tighten its grip over private forests to ensure their rational exploitation. This interventionist vision was most forcefully elaborated upon in the pages of the Leloup report, which was approved by the Minister for Agriculture on 18 May 1945. Marcel Leloup, socialist Conseiller d'État and Director General of the Forestry Administration, proposed (for the first time in French forestry history) that demand for forestry production should dictate supply. In order to meet these demands, the report recommended that two million hectares of uncultivated land be reforested, private forests reorganised into larger units, and private forest owners be made to exploit their forests in accordance with the 'general interest.' The report also prescribed that the state should buy private forests to consolidate existing state ones, thereby ensuring greater production in the long term, as well as imposing forestry management plans on the largest private forests to prevent irresponsible felling. The state, in turn, would pay greater attention to the needs of the market in its own forestry policies. [114] However, Leloup's report was considered too *dirigiste* by pressure groups favouring a more liberal forestry market. In the end, they secured his replacement by the less radical Bernand Dufay in the summer of 1945. [115]

Yet even after Leloup's dismissal, the Forestry Administration continued to experience criticism from private foresters who opposed the state's increased control

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[113] Fourastié, *Les trente glorieuses*.
[114] *Les Eaux et Forêts du 12e au 20e siècle*, 632-4.
[115] Ibid. 632.

over the forest. Opposing the Corporation of Forestry Exploiters and Sawyers passing under the control of the state in 1947, Jules Taquet in *Le Bois National* protested vehemently that the laws introduced by the German occupier through its Vichy intermediary continued to constrain private foresters. According to Taquet, Germany had left behind its forestry structure in France 'like a fly leaves maggots in [a piece of] fruit.' Laws introduced during the Occupation were still in force and he demanded that France's forests be 'denazified.' [116] The tide, however, had turned against supporters of a *laissez-faire* forestry sector as war and occupation had seemingly persuaded state foresters and administrators of the need for a centrally controlled forestry sector. As such, plans to reconstruct the forest in the immediate postwar period echoed Leloup's proposals for wider reconstruction schemes which were to be led by the state and centrally planned. Yet they also built on forestry legislation introduced by Vichy (see chapter three).

After Liberation, foresters used the continuing war against Germany, alongside civilian pressures, as justifications for increasing state intervention. In February 1945, at a conference organised to discuss the Marseille region's economy, the Regional Forestry Conservator stressed that wood had become a 'key material necessary to meet the demands of [the] war [effort], coalmines, and railways,' as well as being essential for reconstruction, 'domestic and industrial heating, paper fabrication, tanning leather, [and] forest fuels.' According to the conservator, this list (which echoed those forwarded by foresters during the Occupation), and the fact that the forestry industry boasted 65,000 employers and 200,000 employees, led to the conclusion that the state should 'take control' of what was 'one of the largest sectors

[116] Jules Taquet, 'Survivance du nazisme,' *Le Bois National*, 8th Year, No. 6, 25 February 1947, 82.

of the country's economy.' The Forestry Administration, he argued, was already expert in forestry production and should therefore oversee 'this mission.' [117] In the discussion that followed, Pierre Mendès France, then Minster for the National Economy, agreed that any reorganisation of the forestry sector should aim to 'meet immediate needs' and 're-establish one of national resources [that] suffered much during the war.' [118]

Forest degradation during the war (see chapter three). provided foresters and other officials with the opportunity to address long-standing issues, such as rural depopulation and reforestation. In a speech delivered in October 1945, Boutière. Forestry Inspector in Draguignan, addressed the problem of the 'Sylvo-Culturo-Pastoral balance' in the Mediterranean region, based on recent experiences in the Var *département* which had been 'so affected by recent destructive events.' Although recognising that nature, given time, could sometimes "repair" itself. Boutière argued that in those places where forests had disappeared and local populations had abandoned mountain life for the 'rich valleys' below 'only the state can take charge of this ruined land.' [119]

France, according to Boutière, needed to 'adopt the same system as the United States: a vast plan of restoration financed and controlled by the state.' This "New Deal" for France, however, should not be overly 'centralised and Caesar-like.' Instead, it should be decentralised and adapted to local conditions as 'each portion of

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[117] Conservateur régional des Eaux-et-Forêts, 'Nouvelle organisation de la production forestière,' in *Conférence économique régionale du 3 février 1945* (Marseille: Imprimerie Nouvelle, 1945), 35.
[118] Quoted in ibid. 35.
[119] ADAM 521 W 30 Boutière 'Aperçu des conditions pratiques de réalisation d'un équilbre Sylvo-Culturo-Pastoral des pays méditerranéens (Considérations sur les possibilities actuelles et examen critique des moyens à mettre en oeuvre),' causerie faite à l'Association des Ingénieurs Agronomes, Groupe de Marseille, 11 October 1945, 4.

Provencal soil, each terrain, each micro-climate requires a different solution.' In the Var alone, some sites required the passage of fire, others needed reforestation or agricultural modernisation, whereas mountain pastures needed development and protection. Yet despite Boutière's stress on decentralisation, he believed that only the state, and men who had devoted their careers to a particular region, could implement such a project over the long term, thereby bringing about a Roosevelt-esque 'man-made biological revival' in France. [120]

Like Boutière, Arthur Dugelay, now promoted to Forestry Conservator in Nice, was deeply concerned about the level of deforestation in Provence, which had been aggravated by recent economic and military conditions. According to Dugelay, the state of Provence's forest was a painful sight; those who had seen 'the distressing spectacle of vast deforested expanses desolating the landscape under the glaring sun, could not deny the timeliness of a reforestation policy.' [121] In reaction to Provence's 'critical forest situation' in 1946 (a result of the ravages of war and fire), Dugelay prepared a law on the restoration of the region's forests and the development of its agriculture and pastures, which envisaged that state investment would fund all restoration costs in state forests and contribute between ten to thirty-five percent of costs in private forests. According to Dugelay, the situation was desperate and required urgent action; in 'two or three years it will be too late because any more large fires could reduce the Var to rocky landscape.' [122]

Dugelay painted a bleak picture of a forestless Provence:

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[120] Ibid. 4-5.
[121] ADAM 521 W 30 Arthur Dugelay, Conservator des Eaux et Forêts, Nice, 'Le reboisement dans le département des Alpes-Maritimes,' 1946, 1-2.
[122] ADAM 521 W 30 Arthur Dugelay, Conservator des Eaux et Forêts, Nice, to Préfet des Alpes-Maritimes, 10 August 1946, 1-4.

Chapter Six

> The forest reduced to scrubland, without roads or paths, is generally the end of farming and a sign of inhabitants deserting farms and hamlets. Bare soil means irregular water supplies, the installation of water run-offs, the stripping (*décage*) of land, [and] the end of crops. A coastal region reduced to bare rocks equals the abandonment of tourism, the installation of a semi-desert climate, [and] a whole region without shade, lacking shelter from the *mistral* and any form of agreeable habitat, just as we have seen in the hills around Marseille and in the North African landscape. [123]

In contrast, the benefits of protecting and reforesting Provence's forests were enormous. They included new forest routes opened up to tourists, new agricultural exploitations, improvements to climatic conditions, less rural depopulation, greater soil protection, and the 'general embellishment of a region universally known for its azure coast, of which one of the most appreciable charms is undoubtedly the Maures and Esterel pine forests.'[124]

Attached to Dugelay's report was an earlier rationale for a proposed 1945 government plan, which stressed the importance of Provence's forests. Again evoking the emergence of desert-like Provence in the near future, the rationale identified the necessary role of the state in reforesting and restoring existing forests, alongside developing agriculture and pastureland. The result would be the 'maintenance of rural populations and the reconstruction of the war- and fire-devastated coastal region.' [125] As Boutière's and Dugelay's reports suggest, foresters

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[123] Ibid. 4.
[124] Ibid. 4.
[125] ADAM 521 W 30 'Mise en forme d'un projet d'ordonnance relative à la reconstitution des forêts provençales (Bouches du Rhône, Var, Alpes-Maritimes, Vaucluse), dévastées par les incendies, et des cultures en terrasse abandonées: exposé des motifs,' 1945.

portrayed reforestation as an essential factor underlying the region's economic, social, and ecological reconstruction and long term well-being.

Plans were also formulated for the modernisation of individual forests that had suffered war damage. A scheme for a war-damaged communal forest in the Maures massif did not suggest restoring the forest to its pre-war state as this would have re-created a forest with 'the same inconveniences' as before. In other words, an unprofitable, impenetrable, and 'messy' (*sale*) forest prone to fire. Instead, the plan proposed to create a modern forest of cork-oaks interspersed with pines and featuring fire-breaks and forest roads. The forest was to be planted rationally, meaning that reforestation would not be attempted in arid areas where 'even the *maquis* struggles to grow.' [126]

War damage also presented the opportunity to modernise mountain landscapes. One report suggested that the state must provide comprehensive aid to reconstruct mountainous regions even where 'working the land is difficult' and unprofitable, as the most pressing concern was to 'maintain a strong race [of mountain people] who have provided the most vigorous elements of the French nation.' Modernisation of 'rural habitats' and the development of villages was needed, the report continued, to counteract rural depopulation, a trend which threatened to 'deprive the [mountains] of [their] young people who talk of getting jobs or leaving for the valleys.' [127]

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[126] ADV 1790 W 47 [n.a.] Forêt communale de Montacroux – 3823 AG projet de reconstitution définitif, exposé des motifs,' [n.d.]. For more on the difficulties of restoring past ecological conditions, see Marcus Hall, *Earth Repair: A Transatlantic History of Environmental Restoration* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 2-3.
[127] CHAN F [10] 7103 [n.a.] 'Hautes-Alpes,' [n.d.].

A 1945 report presented by agronomic engineer Chauvet, also stressed the dangers posed by rural depopulation in high Alpine villages; 'from the social point of view, it decimates a stable, reasoned, thoughtful rural population to swell the number of disappointed and discontented drifters (*déracinés*) in the cities.' Furthermore, the abandonment of agriculture 'diminishes [our] national heritage.' The Alps were of particular concern as 'from the national point of view, the depopulation of a frontier region is always dangerous.' [128] Presumably, Chauvet believed that during a period when France was re-asserting its international borders, a depopulated mountain region would make its territorial claims harder to justify.

Chauvet was not the only one concerned about rural depopulation on the Franco-Italian border. The chief engineer of Génie Rural was anxious that border communes be maintained, including Ristolas, which was located next to Italian valleys that exerted a 'very strong demographic pressure.' As a consequence, the reconstruction of Ristolas brought 'into question France's prestige, which must be kept high at the very moment that [the country is] negotiating the rectification of the Alpine frontier.' [129] A 1945 Génie Rural report on the Vercors also aimed to address rural depopulation in mountain areas, arguing that 'in the general economy of France the Vercors represents, quantitively, a small part. But it is necessary to maintain (*fixer*) these *mountain populations* whose the qualities are indispensables to the country.' If need be, a 'reasonable and carefully considered' immigration policy

[128] CHAN F [10] 7103 Chauvet, 'Notes sur la reconstruction du Queyras et des Hautes vallées alpestres en général,' 5 November 1945, 1-3.
[129] CHAN F [10] 7103 Ingénieur en Chef du Génie Rural and Directeur des Services agricoles, 'Rapport à M. l'Inspecteur Général du Génie Rural, Délégué Général à la Reconstitution Agricole, Reconstruction et équipement de la commune de Ristolas,' 21 May 1946.

should be considered to 'replace disappearing or already extinct families.' [130] Reconstruction of mountain areas, which often involved some form of reforestation. was a way for France to maintain its territorial integrity. In such a way, the reconstruction of a small mountain village took on national importance.

Although Chauvet's report recognised that the *exode rural* had long term roots, it highlighted that wartime evacuations and destructions of Alpine villages could represent the *coup de grâce* for certain communities. Reconstruction would now not be enough; '*it is necessary to resuscitate*' these communities. Luckily, the postwar situation offered an unprecedented opportunity to bring the mountains back to life and Chauvet urged for the implementation of a regional plan. [131] According to Chauvet, such a plan could take two forms; France could either abandon permanent settlement in the high valleys, thereby relying solely on seasonal migrants to work the land in the summer, or it could develop the economy and raise standards of living in those areas. Unsurprisingly, Chauvet favoured the latter option, suggesting that agriculture, hydroelectricity, and small industry could provide the foundations of the mountain economy. Tourism also presented excellent opportunities as the Southern Alps enjoyed the benefits of a Mediterranean climate ('sun, clear skies') as well as the snow and freshness provided by altitude. If planners were able to develop tourism with 'intelligence and taste' there would be 'enormous possibilities,' even if 'some keen mountaineers would regard with terror this prostitution of natural beauties to hordes of tourists.' For Chauvet, it was necessary to accept such 'sacrifices' whilst managing the 'inevitable' development of the mountain

[130] CHAN F [10] 7103 Casays, Chef-Adjoint du Cabinet, M. Thevenot, Ingénieur du Génie Rural. 'Compte-rendu de la Mission effectuée dans le Vercors,' 8 June 1945, emphasis in original.
[131] Chauvet, 'Notes sur la reconstruction du Queyras,' 1-3. Emphasis in original.

landscape. For not only would tourism raise living standards, through the provision of running water and electricity; it would create new cultural and entertainment possibilities for local communities, thereby resurrecting mountain 'folklore.' [132]

The Vercors was one of France's mountainous areas which experienced the most material damage during the war (see chapter five) and within this geographically defined area modernisation plans were also mooted. As elsewhere, the emphasis was strongly on rationalisation and economic development. One report on the massif's 'valorisation' (*mise en valeur*) recognised that some farms were too isolated to be maintained and the land should be 'methodically integrated' into the forest. Remaining farms should be modernised through electrification. The forest too needed development; experiments in acclimatising new tree species should be conducted and further forestry cables established to facilitate exploitation. [133] It seems that the government took the need for modernisation seriously; in 1945 the Minister for Agriculture promised that the development of agriculture and forests would be 'at the heart of the [Vercors'] reconstruction.' According to the Minister, it was not just a question of recreating pre-existing fields and forests, but orientating them towards the future through new production techniques. [134].

There was at least one dissenting voice, however, and it came from Gustave Boissière, a naturalist and speleologist who had helped Allied agents in the Vercors during the war and who was now president of the Comité d'aide et de reconstruction du Vercors. Although acknowledging that reconstruction entailed some

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[132] Ibid. 6-10.
[133] CHAN F [10] 7103 [n.a.] 'Mise en valeur du Vercors,' [n.d.].
[134] CHAN F [10] 7103 Ministre d'Agriculture to Gustave Boissière, Président du Comité d'aide et de reconstruction du Vercors, 13 November 1945.

modernisation, Boissière worried that 'we risk, under the influence of pure technicians, to tilt towards hyper-organisation to the detriment of individualism, moderation, and diversity.' For Boissière, such modernisation placed too much confidence in mass production, organisation, and quantity. [135]

According to Boissière, the reconstruction of the Vercors did need a 'modern development plan' (*aménagement moderne*), but one which 'places the cultivator in full confidence with nature and leads him to consider his farm, his village, his commune and the entire region which surrounds him as an indivisible whole.'[136] It was not that Boissière was against modernisation *per se*. Rather, he was urged that it be introduced on a human scale.

On the whole, however, the measures prescribed for the forests and mountains implied their restoration and modernisation through rationally planned measures recommended by experts. Although the aims of these schemes were similar to those of Pétainiste "back-to-the-landism," most notably preventing the *exode rurale*, they placed greater faith in technocratic and managerial expertise. [137] In a sense, they combined Pétainiste ruralism with the more technocratic strand of administration that emerged within the Vichy regime, although the fundamental difference was that the plans were to restore the landscape of a forward-looking republic rather than re-create the rural golden age that Vichy traditionalists dreamt of. These plans were also forerunners to the Commissariat Général du Plan's larger-

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[135] CHAN F [10] 7103 Gustave Boissière, Président du Comité d'aide et de reconstruction du Vercors, to Raoul Dautry, Ministre de Reconstruction, 4 January 1946.

[136] ADD 943 W 13 Gustave Boissière, Président du Comité d'aide et de reconstruction du Vercors to Directeur du Cabinet du Commissaire de la République, Préfecture de Lyon, 17 November 1945, 4-5.

[137] For more on the continuing concerns about rural depopulation during and after the war, see Sara B. Pritchard "'Paris et le désert français': Urban and Rural Environments in Post-World War II France,' in Andrew C. Isenberg (ed.), *The Nature of Cities* (Rochester NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 182.

scale projects to restore regional balance (principally between Paris and the provinces) guided by the principle of '*aménagement du territoire*' or "territorial housekeeping."[138] I will now examine how postwar reforestation became one of the ways to restore balance and prosperity to the French countryside.

The *Fonds Forestier National*

Despite Leloup's dismissal following his controversial report (see above), many of his proposals were eventually implemented. [139] Most immediately, his vision of a vast reforestation of France looked set to be realised as the Assemblée Nationale voted in the Fonds Forestier National (FFN) on 30 September 1946. The FFN addressed many of the issues raised in the plans put forward by Provence's foresters. In particular it prescribed the reforestation and the modernisation of existing forests. And like other forms of national reconstruction, the FFN was planned and implemented by the central state (one article in *Rivières et Forêts* explicitly linked the reforestation programme with the plan Monnet [140]). Developed by forestry officials and managed by the agricultural ministry through a Comité de contrôle de fonds (Finance Control Committee), the FFN built on increasing state control of the forest that had been strengthened through Vichy legislation. It also had

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[138] Bess, *Light-Green Society*, 49-52.

[139] For instance, Charles de Gaulle launched a policy of state acquisition of private forests in the 1960s and a 1985 forestry law reorganised private forests. See *Les Eaux et Forêts du 12e au 20e siècle*, 633.

[140] J. Melinotte, 'Le plan Monnet... et la forêt,' *Rivières et forêts: revue de défense du patrimoine naturel français* 1 (April 1947) 12-15. For more on Monnet, 'the architect of post-war planning' see Kedward, *La Vie en Bleu*, 353.

a recent precedent in Vichy's largely failed reforestation campaign, such as the reforestation law of 21 January 1942 (see chapter two).

The reforestation of France was part and parcel of the country's reconstruction project. Reconstruction meant more than repairing war damage and increasing growth and standards of living. It was also supposed to ensure France's independence and *grandeur*. This echoed other developments in French society, such as new attitudes towards technology which responded to the need for enhanced national sovereignty. Although recognising the difficulties of establishing exact causal links between the Second World War and long-term structural changes, Michael Bess identifies the traumatic defeat of 1940 as a 'wake-up call' for the French, paving the way for the acceptance of a form of 'technological Darwinism' among French politicians and the general population (which was related to ideas of social Darwinism):

> Not only statesmen of the Left and Right, but also broad segments of the population, entered after 1944 into a tacit but steely-hard agreement: we will never let another "1940" happen to us again; we will make ourselves so technologically strong and so economically vigorous that we never find ourselves at any other nation's mercy again. Here lay the essence of technological Darwinism. Rapid and sustained economic growth, in the eyes of many French citizens, became not just a desirable goal but a matter of maintaining national independence; technology became not just a vehicle for enhancing the quality of life, but a pivotal factor in providing basic economic and military security. [141]

[141] Bess, *Light-Green Society*, 20.

Chapter Six

The war had starkly exposed the deficiencies of France's political. social, and economic structures, especially in comparison with the technological prowess of the United States, which had recently dropped two atomic bombs on Japanese cities. The consensus in France was that the country must modernise to survive. 'Technological Darwinism' arguably motivated France's development of nuclear power and weapons in the post war period. As Gabrielle Hecht contends, *le nucléaire* enabled France to claw back a sense of grandeur in the face of the shambolic state of French infrastructure and feelings of national humiliation generated by the war. [142]

France's bid to use technological projects to enhance independence and restore its grandeur impacted on ideas about nature and the landscape itself. As Sara Pritchard highlights, postwar development of the Rhône river and the challenges to be surmounted during its transformation were represented as ways of rebuilding national pride and identity; 'amid reconstruction, the portrayal of river development as a battle – and one that France would undoubtedly win – might assuage and redeem a nation haunted by memories of defeat. Winning the war on the banks of the Rhône could be a crucial first step in regaining domestic and international political stature.' [143] Controlling, improving, and overcoming nature were ways to reclaim and reinforce the nation's grandeur and independence.

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[142] Hecht, *The Radiance of France*, 1-3. Bess also suggests that nuclear weapons were supposed to guarantee France's independence and territorial integrity. Under de Gaulle's leadership during the Cold War 'both military sovereignty and an independent foreign policy...hinged on the special status that nuclear arms conferred; henceforth the French territory would become a sanctuary, a haven that no invader could violate without facing incineration.' Bess, *Light-Green Society*, 30.
[143] Pritchard, 'Reconstructing the Rhône,' 766.

Similarly, postwar reforestation was a way of "improving on nature" or developing the French landscape, as well as reinforcing the nation's strength. In the postwar era, a consensus emerged among administrators and state foresters that France needed to rejuvenate its forests to maintain national sovereignty and ensure the ecological balance of the nation. This was influenced by numerous factors that are worth recapping. War and occupation had depleted forestry resources as well as exposing France's alarming reliance on timber imports to sustain its industries. Moreover, substantial quantities of wood were needed for reconstruction. Concerns also existed that the general dilapidation and possible disappearance of forested areas would exacerbate rural depopulation, as well as increase the risk of erosion and floods along with their social and economic repercussions. The FFN addressed these recent and longstanding concerns.

But before the FFN's introduction, foresters had linked reforestation to national regeneration (as had been the case during the Occupation). In 1945, Dufay argued that reforestation was needed to 'repair' the 'devastations' of war and fill in the 'numerous holes' in forest cover that had been created by combat and overexploitation. At stake was more than the revival of forests, important as that was. Instead, Dufay argued that 'for the reconstitution of our national economy, reforestation is vital; it's a collective endeavour with which every French person should collaborate.' [144] For foresters, the FFN provided a vital means to restore France's forests and enhance their productivity, thereby restoring the country's sense of pride and reducing its dependence on imports. In such a way, the FFN can be seen

[144] Bernard Dufay, 'Il faut reboiser,' *Revue des Eaux et Forêts*, 84/8-9 (August-September 1946), 431.

as an attempt to guarantee France's self-sufficiency and sovereignty through a policy of 'autarky.' [145] The idea that reforestation was a national endeavour was distilled into and advanced by the FFN's slogan; 'Reforestation is a national duty' (*Reboiser est un devoir national*). [146]

Given their training and professional background, it is hardly unexpected that forestry officials claimed reforestation to be of immense national importance. Jean Messines, the Forestry Administration's Inspector General, argued that 'in the troubling period in which we live, after the disastrous war and at a time of intense fermentation of political and social ideas [alongside] dominant economic preoccupations, it is not surprising to see the question of reforestation... rise up the agenda.' [147] Unfortunately, there is little available evidence to assess the level of interest in reforestation among the general population. It is entirely possible that many French people were indifferent to reforestation as they struggled to rebuild their lives after the war. In 1949 Dufay himself admitted that 'too many French people are unaware... of the capital importance of the problem of our forestry resources.'[148] But it seems that the country's president, Charles de Gaulle, recognised the forest's role in national life when he stated that the 'existence of empty expanses' (*étendues désertiques*) in the fire-ravaged Landes forest in the South West was 'undignified of a great country like France.' [149] It seems that for de

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[145] ADAM 521 W 78 Jean de Vaissière, 'Le reboisement de la France dans le cadre du plan de restauration agricole,' (Toulouse: Imprimerie régional, [n.d.]), 6.
[146] ADAM 521 W 78 'Reboiser est un devoir national' undated publicity brochure.
[147] Jean Messines, 'Étude générale: actualité du Reboisement,' *Revue des Eaux et Forêts*, 84/ 8-9 (August-September 1945), 435.
[148] Bernard Dufay, 'Avant-propos,' *Rivières et Forêts, Numéro Spécial consacré aux Eaux et Forêts et au tourisme cynegétique et halieatique*, Nos. 10-12 (January-March 1949), 3.
[149] 'Ordannance no.45-852 du 28 avril 1945 relative à la mise en valeur de la région des landes de Gascogne,' in *Revue des Eaux et Forêts*, 83/7 (July 1945), 430.

Gaulle, the existence of barren, deserted land undermined his vision of French *grandeur*. Rebuilding forests was deemed to be in the national interest, and on 19 October 1945 the government took on the responsibility to contribute eighty percent towards the costs of restoring forests that had been 'partially or totally destroyed by acts of war.' [150]

Just as it had done in Vichy France, the Forestry Administration portrayed itself as an embattled agency tirelessly working against the odds to reforest France and thus contribute to the nation's revival. Dufay outlined the huge task ahead to readers of *Rivières et Forêts*; in France 6,328,000 hectares were ripe for reforestation, as well as approximately 300,000 hectares of degraded forests and coppices that were currently incapable of providing construction and industry-grade timber. The Forestry Administration was charged with the 'enormous' job of replanting France's forests and foresters would become the 'apostles' of reforestation. Employing similar language to that used after defeat in 1940, Dufay highlighted that 'each forester must direct all his will towards the goal [of reforestation] and spare neither his time nor his efforts.' At stake was the chance to 'serve France and contribute to [the nation's] revival.' Dufay reassured his readers that the foresters were up to the task; 'a long tradition of honour is the guarantee.' [151]

An important question concerning the FFN is its place in the history of French forests and the extent to which war and occupation brought about its introduction. After all, the FFN was proposed by forestry officials in response to a variety of forest-related anxieties, many of which were of long germination,

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[150] ADV 1790 W 122 Directeur-Général des Eaux et Forêts to conservateurs des Eaux et Forêts Consevators, 'Subventions pour reboisement,' 19 October 1945.
[151] Dufay, 'Avant-propos,' 4.

including concerns about the low productivity of France's forests, rural depopulation, and the deforestation of certain regions. These issues pre-dated the war. As the Forestry Administration's leadership explained in the FFN's *exposé des motifs*, France's deficiencies in forestry production meant that the country had to import huge quantities of wood each year before the outbreak of the war. [152]

But war, occupation, and post-Liberation pressures had brought to a head these long-standing problems. As the Forestry Administration acknowledged, France's forests had found themselves in a 'considerably aggravated situation' since Liberation, due to the 'devastations of war,' as well as attacks by fires and insects in the immediate postwar period. [153] The exigencies of reconstruction and growing consumption of wood-derived products, such as paper, combined with timber shortages in France and elsewhere meant that France 'risked, if it does not undertake an enormous effort, to find itself greatly handicapped in years to come.' [154]

Although a project in the mould of the FFN might have been introduced without the experience of war and occupation, it seems that the effect of the "dark years" made it expedient to legislate in favour of reforestation in 1946. As Bess argues, after the war, the 'key discontinuity' was the '*pace* of change.'[155] The war had brutally exposed the apparent fragility of France's forests as well as

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[152] CACAN 19880470/144 Annex No. 1, 'Exposé des motifs et de projet de Loi de la Direction Générale des Eaux et Forêts instituant un Fonds Forestier National,' in *Recueil des lois, décrets, arrêtés et règlements financiers concernant le Fonds Forestier National* (Paris: Maison Rapide, [n.d.]), 15.

[153] 'Exposé des motifs et de projet de Loi de la Direction Générale des Eaux et Forêts instituant un Fonds Forestier National,' 15. Fires continued to devastate the Landes forest after 1945 and elm tree beetles were particularly active in forests in the Vosges. See Badré, *Histoire de la forêt française*, 245-6.

[154] Exposé des motifs et de projet de Loi de la Direction Générale des Eaux et Forêts instituant un Fonds Forestier National,' 16.

[155] Bess, *Light-Green Society*, 16.

substantially weakening their resources and capacity. For foresters, and presumably the Assemblée Nationale, which voted in the law, rebuilding the forest was an essential component of national survival. [156] France needed a productive forest to satisfy its need for timber and to shelter it from the unpredictability of international timber markets. The consequences of failing to do so were disquieting. In 1949, Dufay raised the possibility that due to a lack of wood and the fact that exporter countries were becoming more interested in supplying finished products than raw materials, France may soon find itself in the position of having to import paper, with disastrous consequences for its own paper industry and balance of payments. [157]

The FFN aimed to 'reconstitute [France's] forest resources (*patrimoine forestier*)' through 'reforestation on a vast scale,' as well as 'transform deciduous coppices into forests or pine plantations, organise the valorisation and conservation of wooded land, increase forest resources, and [ensure] better use the products of the forest.' [158] There was, at this time, some recognition from foresters that a productive forest did not necessarily equate to uniform stands of easily exploitable full-growth timber. A 1945 article in the *Revue des Eaux et Forêts* authored by the Forestry Administration's Inspector General recognised some of the uses of "wasteland," such as grazing and hunting, noting how 'very little land is completely uncultivated. Shrubs, *friches*, heathland, garrigues, dunes and marshes are not totally

[156] A similar realisation occurred in Britain after the First World War which had exposed the country's timber deficiencies and paved the way for the creation of the Forestry Commission. See West, 'Forests and National Security,' 270-94.
[157] Bernard Dufay, 'Avant-propos,', 4.
[158] 'Exposé des motifs et de projet de Loi de la Direction Générale des Eaux et Forêts instituant un Fonds Forestier National,' 16.

unproductive.' [159] But as the FFN's rationale suggested, it fell very much within the productionist vision advanced in post-war France; forest surface area would be increased and existing forests made more productive.

The FFN's steering committee identified three main priorities; the reforestation of abandoned agricultural land; the valorisation of coppices; and the reconstitution of fire damaged massifs. [160] The most ambitious aspect of the FFN was the reforestation of two million hectares of uncultivated land, to be paid for (along with the other strands of the FFN) by a variable tax on forestry products. [161] The reforestation of two million hectares was to take between twenty and thirty years at a rate of 70,000 to 100,000 hectares each year. The level of reforestation needed was not uniform across France and certain areas that had suffered recent fire damage or been unproductive for many years, such as the Massif Central, the Landes forest, and the Maures and Esteral massifs, were identified as being in particular need of reforestation. [162] Given that two-thirds of French forests were privately owned, the FFN directed its publicity efforts towards private foresters and provided considerable financial incentives for them to reforest and ameliorate their land, in

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[159] Messines, 'Étude générale: actualité du Reboisement,' 437. On a local level, a 1947 Eaux et Forêts report acknowledged the importance of the *maquis* on the island of Port-Cros; 'it is certain that one of the essential characters of the island is the arborescent *maquis* vegetation [which] hikers like to walk among and enjoy it up close.' ADAM 521 W 31 Monsieur Coudes, 'Rapport sur la forêt de Port-Cros,' attached to Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Nice to Inspector Pal, Toulon, 'Note de service: île de Port-Cros- Marine Nationale,' 28 April 1947.

[160] *Les Eaux et Forêts du 12e au 20e siècle*, 643.

[161] This tax was originally set at ten percent but was lowered to six percent on 2 August 1947. See 'Arrêté du 1er octobre 1946 fixant le taux de la taxe instituée par l'article 4 de la loi du 30 Septembre 1946 relative au Fonds Forestier National,' in *Recueil des lois, décrets, arrêtés et règlements financiers concernant le Fonds Forestier National*, 5; and CHAN 19880470/144 'Annexe II: textes se rapportant au Fonds Forestier National [n.d.].

[162] See Vaissière, 'Le reboisement de la France,' 4; *Les Eaux et Forêts du 12e au 20e siècle*, 643; and CACAN 19880470/144 Direction Général des Eaux et Forêts, 'Evaluation des surfaces à reboiser par département en fonction du programme de reboisement arête par M. le Ministre de l'Agriculture [n.d.].

the form of loans, grants, and materials. And in keeping with productivist priorities, fast growing species of trees, such as poplars, were favoured.[163]

Foresters attempted to add credence to their pro-reforestation arguments through the assertion that reforestation was not simply about producing more trees for reconstruction and industry. Instead, reforestation facilitated the efficient use of the rest of the countryside. In the 1950s, Jean De Vaissière, the forestry conservator in charge of the Service de la forêt privée, stressed the importance of the FFN and the forest as a whole to the 'general wellbeing' of the country; where the 'forest disappears, regions inhospitable to man [sic] replace it.' According to de Vaissière, the forest was essential to agriculture as it protected fields and crops from 'natural disasters' (such as erosion and floods), while woodland was the only possibility of exploitation for certain types of land. Reforestation also allowed for a more useful division of land. Vaissière argued that agricultural lands should be grouped together around the village with isolated and outlying fields given over to reforestation. This would stop wasteland spreading from one field to another; 'each plot that falls *en friche* causes surrounding fields to be abandoned and the rot (*mal*) spreads like a cancer.' [164] In sum, the FFN was presented as part of a 'coherent plan aiming for a rational exploitation of land through the search for a satisfactory balance between farms, forest, pasture, and fruit tree crops.' With such schemes, France and other European countries strove to replace 'anarchical' forms of land use.[165]

Healthy but largely unprofitable forests, then, had a place in the postwar French landscape. In 1952, the Forestry Administration's Director General advised

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[163] Vaissière, 'Le reboisement de la France,' 7-9; and 'Reboiser est un devoir national.'
[164] Vaissière, 'Le reboisement de la France,' 4.
[165] Ibid. 10.

conservators that reforestation on land which was unable to support highly productive forests was still in the 'general interest' as it prevented soil erosion and was a means of ensuring the 'economic and human balance.' [166] In addition, a 1952 issue of *Revue Forestière Française* stressed that the FFN would revive economies and restore 'social balance,' even in those areas where reforestation was not particularly profitable. As such, it deserved to be considered alongside the better-known developments in electricity, coalmines, shipping, and railways. [167]

A thorough investigation into the success of the FFN lies beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, it seems that there were some teething problems, at least in the dry Mediterranean climate of Provence where the heat (and rabbits) inhibited the growth of some plantations. [168] Such was the lack of success with Aleppo pine reforestation plantations at Roquefort-la-Bédoule in the Bouches-du-Rhône (due to again to rabbits and aridity) that FFN repayments were suspended until new reforestation techniques could be perfected, much to consternation of the local town council. [169] One forestry official in the Alpes-Maritimes also complained that local town halls and forest owners remained indifferent or even hostile to reforestation, believing that it opposed their interests, while those that were in favour were

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[166] ADAM 521 W 78 Directeur-Général des Eaux et Forêts to Conservateurs des Eaux et Forêts, 'Plan de reboisement 1952-1957,' 26 March 1952, 5.

[167] F. du Vignaux, Directeur-Général des Eaux et Forêts, 'Le Fonds Forestier National: Preface,' *Revue Forestière Française* 9 (September 1952), 523-4; and Louis Velay, 'Premier bilan,' *Revue Forestière Française* 10 (30 September 1952), 613, 634.

[168] ADAM 521 W 75 Directeur-Général des Eaux et Forêts to Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Nice, 'Travaux de reboisement par contrat du Fonds Forestier National pour le compte des collectivités publiques et des particuliers en zone méditerranéene,' 16 November 1950.

[169] ADBDR 188 W 79 Maire de Roquefort-la-Bédoule, 'Résolution,' 8 July 1953; and Abraud, Ingénieur des Eaux et Forêts, Aix-en-Provence, 'Rapports: subventions pour reboisements - résolution du Conseil Municipal de Roquefort-la-Bédoule, 13 August 1953.

disheartened by 'repeated failures' due to fire, soil, and climate. [170] And on a national level, it appears that funding shortfalls restricted the functioning and extent of the FFN; in 1955 one-third of reforestation projects had to be turned down. [171]

However, it appears that over the longer term the FFN performed well, and by 1955 foresters were celebrating the reforestation of the first 500,000 hectares (a figure which had risen to one million hectares by 1965). [172] A brochure produced by the ministry of agriculture to mark the FFN's 'twenty five years of work,' predictably gave a positive account of how the programme had aimed to break with a forest 'subsistence economy' to move towards a 'market economy,' 'reconstitute' war-damaged and over-exploited forests, and move on from a 'tradition of *attentisme* and non-intervention.' By 1971, the brochure continued, the FFN had financed the reforestation of 1,459,000 hectares, of which seventy-six percent had been achieved in private forests.[173]

Although the FFN had yet to reach its target of two million hectares, the figure reached by 1971 represented a considerable extension of the forest (a trend also helped by the abandonment of farmland during agricultural modernisation). France had also increased forestry production levels; production for construction-

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[170] ADAM 521 W 75 Flekcher, Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, Nice Ouest, to Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts, Nice, 'Reboisement – Fonds Forestier National – Propagande,' 28 June 1948.

[171] ADAM 521 W 75 F. du Vignaux, Directeur-Général des Eaux et Forêts to Conservateurs des Eaux et Forêts, 'Contrats du Fonds Forestiers National, programme du 2ème semestre 1955,' 8 August 1955. See also ADAM 521 W 75 Directeur-Général des Eaux et Forêts to Conservateurs des Eaux et Forêts, 'Subventions pour reboisement,' 4 April 1946.

[172] CACAN 19880470/146 Réunion du Comité de Contrôle du Fonds Forestier National, 'Note pour Ministre de l'Agriculture: Projet de manifestation à l'occasion de la mise en boisement, par le F.F.N. du 500,000e hectare,' 27 October 1955; and *Les Eaux et Forêts du 12e au 20e siècle*, 645.

[173] Out of the 1,459,000 reforested hectares, the extension of forests onto 'bare land' represented thirty-four percent, the 'reconstitution and improvement' of existing forests, fifty eight percent, and plantations outside of the forest, eight percent. According to the brochure, reforestation was still important as forests were needed for their products, soil preservation qualities, and as a space where city dwellers can 'find calm, isolation, rest [and] relaxation.' *Fonds Forestier National: 25 ans de travaux* (Paris: Documentation Française/ Ministre de l'Agriculture, 1972), 1-6, 22.

quality timber had risen from 10,100,000m^3 in 1945 to 18,500,000m^3 in 1970, while industry-grade timber had increased from 4,600,000m^3 to 10,000,000m^3 during the same period. [174] As these figure show, France succeeded in increasing production in its forests, as it had elsewhere in its economy.

In all, therefore, it seems that the FFN was successful in repairing the environmental damage of the war, even if not all traces had been eradicated (in the 1970s, a considerable number of trees in Lorraine still had bullets embedded in their trunks, a legacy of the world wars [175]). In addition, the FFN made France less dependant on timber imports. Postwar reforestation, however, did not restore the forests to their exact pre-war composition. The sixty years or so that have passed is a relatively short time in forest terms, meaning that some war-damaged forests have not yet regained their former maturity. Furthermore, the type of forests produced by the FFN were ones more geared towards production, were composed of different species, and were better equipped with fire breaks and forestry roads.

As the case of the FFN suggests, war-related environmental modifications contributed to changes in environmental policies which in turn led to further environmental transformation. But forests in France have never been static, and in this sense the war was part of their continual evolution. The FFN is also illustrative of the ways in which the forest continued to be linked to national survival, both in terms of forestry production and more nebulous notions concerning social and ecological balance in the countryside. As such, it represented a national duty even as the French began to put the material repercussions of the war behind them. In the

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[174] *Fonds Forestier National: 25 ans de travaux*, 2.
[175] M. Bach, 'Les forêts mitraillées en Lorraine,' *Revue forestière française* 27 (1975), 217-22.

words of André Dulin, State Secretary for Agriculture in the 1950s, 'reforestation is a work and duty of the whole nation.' [176]

The French were largely successful in removing the traces of war from the landscape and reconstructing their countryside in the immediate postwar era. The dominant narrative of this chapter, therefore, has been the erasure of war's physical impact. The next chapter presents a different story, as it examines how guardians of memory have sought to preserve and perpetuate the traces of war within the landscape. Rather than provide a comprehensive overview, I focus exclusively on the relationship between nature and wartime memories in postwar France.

[176] André Dulin, 'Introduction,' *Rivières et forêts*, cahier spécial no. 4, 'Le reboisement en France,' 1955-1956, 2.

Chapter Seven

Nature and Memory in Postwar France [1]

This chapter explores the ways in which memories have been associated with natural (as opposed to urban) landscapes in postwar France and how they have been "grounded" in the French soil. Preservers of memory have at times employed the natural environment to naturalise and eternalise memories, as well as to instil "living memory" in the subsequent generations that did not directly experience the war. In certain places, such as the Vercors, the landscape itself becomes a sacred site of remembrance. The French state and resistance veterans revere the Vercors' mountainous terrain as a patriotic space and an affirmation of their democratic values. [2] However, landscapes have other functions and meanings, and not all visitors glean the lessons they are supposed to. Moreover, although nature is mobilised to remember resistance, it can obscure the past and transform sites of memory. This manifestation of nature's indifference to human memories exposes the problematic relationship between nature and memory, as nature undermines the very memories it is supposed to guard for eternity.

In this chapter, I consider this relationship both in general terms and through specific sites of memory, in particular the Vercors. Not only has the Vercors become a major, if not *the* major, symbol of armed resistance against the

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[1] A version of this chapter will appear as Chris Pearson, 'Memorialising the Maquis: "Grounding" the Memory of War in the Vercors Regional Park, France,' in Charles Closmann (ed.), *War and the Environment* (forthcoming).

[2] On how battlefields become sacred, patriotic sites, see Edward Tabor Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and their Battlefields* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 1-3.

German occupier, it is also one of the sites where most effort has been made to preserve and perpetuate resistance memories within a natural landscape, especially since the creation of the Site National Historique de la Résistance en Vercors (SNHRV) in 1994. [3] Resistance organisations and the French state have moulded the Vercors into a patriotic site to be revered and protected as an affirmation of French republican and democratic values. [4] According to historian François Bédarida, one of the SNHRV's historical consultants, 'the Vercors has become the '"haut-lieu" *par excellence* of the Resistance and the very incarnation of its spirit.' [5] Just as nature was mobilised as a natural ally during the conflict, it was then – and still is – deployed as a means of remembering the war.

I do not wish to suggest that the relationship between nature and the commemoration of wartime memories is somehow "natural" or inevitable. In this sense, I disagree with Bédarida's claim that the 'ruggedness' of the Vercors' landscape 'spontaneously evokes the call of freedom.' [6] Instead, I consider memory as something actively constructed in relation to landscape.[7] For although memorial landscapes may, at first sight, appear fixed and eternal, they are

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[3] Gilles Vergnon claims that the Vercors is the most famous maquis site in France. *Vercors*, 13. In all, Olivier Vallade estimates that there are approximately 300 memorials dedicated to the war years in the Vercors. *Des combats au souvenir: lieux de résistance et de mémoire – Isère et Vercors* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaire de Grenoble, 1997), 5. The Site National Historique de la Résistance en Vercors was created under the auspices of the Parc Natural Régional du Vercors, after pressure from the Pionniers et Combattants Volontaires du Vercors. Its funding was assured by the central French state, local authorities, and the European Union.

[4] As such, the Vercors corresponds with Kenneth Foote's identification of sites of 'sanctification' where the victims are remembered alongside the cause for which they died. *Shadowed Ground*, 7-10.

[5] François Bédarida, 'Le Vercors dans l'histoire,' in Parc Naturel Régional du Vercors brochure, *Site national historique de la résistance en Vercors* [n.d.]. This document was produced to introduce and promote the Site national historique de la résistance en Vercors, before its introduction in 1994.

[6] Ibid.

[7] For more on the human construction of memory, see Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Daniel J. Sherman, *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); and Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, 'Setting the Framework,' in Winter and Sivan, *War and Remembrance*, 6-39.

endlessly (re)formulated and challenged, reflecting the wider expression of memories in the public sphere, which are constructed, disparate, and mutable. [8] Memory, like nature, is subject to endless changes; neither is a fixed nor stable entity. In fact, unpredictability and disruptability may more accurately describe the characteristics of both. [9] The linking of nature and memory can naturalise or obscure the production, fragility, and contradictions of memory for political ends.

I begin by examining the associations drawn between resistance memories and maquis, forest, and mountain landscapes. I then explore how memorials engage with their natural surroundings, as well as how guidebooks and organised tours try to recreate a sense of the past through nature. Finally, I consider nature's challenge to memory through its modification of memorial sites.

Maquis, forests, and memories of resistance

Though associations between forests, maquis, and armed resistance were made during and after the war, there is nothing preordained about the linkage between resistance and nature; many resistance networks developed and fought in urban settings (the numerous plaques, memorials, and resistance-related street names that pepper the French urban landscape attest to this activity). [10]

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[8] Young questions the notion of "collective memory," persuasively putting forward in its place the concept of "collected memories," a model that suggests diverse and competing memories focussing on particular sites or acts of commemoration. See *Texture of Memory*, xi-xii.

[9] For the view of nature as disruptive and unpredictable see Worster, 'Nature and the Disorder of History,' 65-85.

[10] As Kedward argues, between 1940 and 1942, resistance was 'urban-based with urban values,' and resisters barely considered 'guerrilla warfare in the countryside or even a tactical reteat into the hills.' Kedward, 'The Maquis and the Culture of the Outlaw,' 234. On Lyon's urban

Nonetheless, resistance is now most commonly associated with natural landscapes. As Jean-Marie Guillon argues, memories of rural resistance now over-shadow other forms of struggle against the occupier and have become the 'archetype' of resistance combat in 'everyday memory.' As such, Guillon agrees with Philippe Joutard that France has seen the emergence of a 'maquisardisation of memory.' [11]

As I argued in chapter two, rural resistance units were perhaps the first group within French society to invest *maquis* landscapes with positive meanings. In the immediate postwar period, imaginative associations persisted between *maquis* vegetation and notions of freedom, heroism, and combating oppression. In 1945, J. Puech offered the following association of *maquis* and resistance:

> Maquis! That cracks like a gunshot! One sees the desert of stone and dry herbs; one smells the odour of labiates and the resin of cytise. Maquis! Land of the "vendetta," a more honest justice than that of men [sic], a more demanding honour than that of our laws. Maquis! Something raw, savage, chivalrous. [It represents] bravery, panache, [and] heroism mixed with a light touch of "don quixotism." [12]

Puech's passage transformed *maquis* landscape into a synonym for bravery, honour, and mystery - qualities associated with resistance.

In turn, the coupling of maquis-resistance and maquis-vegetation has invested the latter with notions of tenacity, resistance and freedom. For instance,

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environment and earlier "resistance" activity in post-revolutionary France, see Richard Cobb, *The French and their Revolution* (London: John Murray, 1998), 271-87.

[11] Guillon suggests that the focus on the *maquis* has arisen because it reinforces the idea that the French bore arms against the occupier and 'actively participated in the Liberation combats.' In addition, the 'maquisardisation of memory' links the resistance's combatants with previous volunteer and regular army units who fought to secure French sovereignty, not least during the First World War. Jean-Marie Guillon, 'Monuments et mémoire de la résistance en Provence,' *Provence historique* 193 (July-September 1998), 337-8.

[12] Puech, *La montagne des sept douleurs*, 29.

a recent text describes Mediterranean scrubland thus; 'solitude/ strangeness/ toughness/ humility/ purpose/ freedom.' [13] It is striking how many of these words - in particular 'toughness,' 'purpose,' and 'freedom' - are associated with resistance fighters and it is hard to imagine that these words would be linked to *maquis* without the wartime *maquisard* experience. Furthermore, the deployment of "maquis" has become suggestive shorthand for the alternative, underground, or oppositional nature of certain social groups and activities. For instance, Sandy Queudrus entitles his research on the French free-party scene *Un maquis techno* and Philippe Garnier names his book on maverick U.S. writers, *Maquis*.[14] Jean Orsini is correct, therefore, to argue that the term *maquis* has become universalised, 'a synonym for resistance against all oppression.' [15]

One of the most remarkable aspects of the reinvention of the *maquis* during the Second World War is that a relatively obscure, overlooked, and hard to define form of vegetation rooted in the particular climatic and topographical features of the Mediterranean gained greater international significance, due solely to the resistance's adoption of the term. Not least, the wild *maquis* landscape has become entwined with images and memories of resistance on the British side of the channel. For instance, Gunby Hadath's 1947 novel *Men of the Maquis* links *maquis* landscapes and the struggle to save France's freedom in the following passage in which his characters plan the location of their resistance base:

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[13] Conseil Général de la Drôme, *Mille tendresses: grands espaces naturels de la Drôme* (Valance: Imprimerie Jalin, 2000), 36.
[14] Sandy Queudrus, *Un maquis techno: modes d'engagement et pratiques sociales dans la free-party* (Nantes : M. Séteun, 2000); and Philippe Garnier, *Maquis: Aperçu d'un autre paysage américain* (Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages, 1993).
[15] Jean Orsini, 'Le maquis, paysage historique,' in Lorenzi, *Le maquis corse*, 39.

> De Laffrey: '"surely they will be hidden high on the mountains"
>
> "As was the *maquis* in Corsica!" Mollier exclaimed.
>
> De Laffrey caught up the word, and his eyes were alight. "Tis so! Like the Corsican *maquis*. I thank you, friend Paul. And yet," he resumed the next moment, quietly pondering, "how unlike in its essence shall our *maquis* prove to the Corsicans!' For theirs was the refuge of brigands in fear of the law, and of malefacteurs with a price on their heads. Come, tell me, Paul, what shall *ours* be?"
>
> "The symbol of the soul of France," Paul responded.
>
> "Upon my faith, you speak truly! Said Jacques, with odd gruffness. "If le bon Dieu wills, our *maquis* shall stand for France freed."' [16]

Hadath's laboured prose is likely to have had less exposure than an information board in Cornwall at the Eden Project's Temperate Biome, which uses *maquis*' resistance connotations to introduce visitors to the vegetation (figure one):

> Maquis – heard the name before?
>
> Where have you heard the name before?
>
> Maquis was the name given to the French underground movement that fought against the German occupying forces in World War II. This is where they hid out – not the most comfortable place to be.

An adjacent plaque draws attention to *maquis*' toughness, highlighting its resilience and ability to survive dry climates. A subsequent plaque describes *maquis* plants as 'tough customers,' containing flora that resists 'munchers,' water loss, and fire. These plaques invest similar qualities, such as fortitude and resistance (whether to the German army or munchers), in both maquis-resistance and maquis-vegetation. Moreover, the Eden Project plaques are illustrative of

[16] Gunby Hadath, *Men of the Maquis* (London and Redhill: Lutterworth Press, 1947), 14. On maquis landscapes in Corsica, see Lorenzi, *Le maquis corse*.

how, as Orsini argues, the word *maquis* became 'globalised' due to the Second World War. [17]

Figure 1. *Maquis* information board at the Eden Project (September 2004). © Chris Pearson

The reinvention of *maquis* from a supposedly worthless form of vegetation to one of national (and international) importance demonstrates how warfare transforms perceptions of landscape, and is also indicative of the emotive appeal of landscape during the construction of memory.

Of course, *maquis* is associated with resistance because acts of resistance took place in the *maquis*. Memorials now mark out isolated sites within the *maquis* as authentic places of resistance, which would otherwise be indistinguishable from the surrounding vegetation. A 1945 memorial located in the Bessillon mountains in the Var (where eight resistance fighters died on 27

[17] Orsini, 'Le maquis, paysage historique,' 39.

July 1944) marked out this secluded corner of *maquis* as a place of French martyrdom (figure two).

Figure 2. Resistance memorial in the Bessillon mountains, Var (April 2005). © Chris Pearson

Equally, the memorial at the 'vallon des fusillés' near the Var village of Signes identifies an isolated area of *maquis* as a site of national significance (the memorial was inaugurated in 1945 and designated a 'national memorial' in 1996). Without such memorials, the uninitiated visitor would remain oblivious to the site's significance.

However, commemorating the *maquis* in the *maquis* is not unproblematic. At both Bessillon and Signes, the remoteness of the actual sites makes them relatively difficult to visit, which has led to the erection of additional

memorials in more accessible places.[18] At Bessillon, a roadside memorial (complete with a lay-by for cars) marks the beginning of the route up to the more secluded monuments. As the Bessillon and Signes memorials suggest, the seclusion and dense cover of *maquis* vegetation act as obstacles to public memorialisation. *Maquis* vegetation, then, is an authentic site of resistance and yet also obscures the commemoration of *maquisard* memories.

Full-growth forests often provided better refuge than *maquis* vegetation during the Occupation, not least because forestry camps provided cover and employment for *maquisards* (see chapter three). Therefore, forests have also become associated with memories of resistance in non-forested sites. The paintings of resistance veteran Jean Amblard provide a useful focus for uncovering the ways in which forests have been linked with resistance in postwar France. Amblard, in a 1946 series of paintings commissioned by the French government, presented the forest as a natural ally of resistance fighters. Covering the walls of the Hôtel de Ville's *salle des mariages* in the northern Parisian suburb of Saint-Denis, Amblard's paintings depict *maquisard* life in the forest. Such is the intensity and detail of the countless leaves in the paintings that the forest milieu almost overshadows the *maquisards*, suggesting that the trees are an integral part of resistance history (figures three and four).

[18] See Guillon, 'Monuments et mémoire de la résistance,' 328, 332.

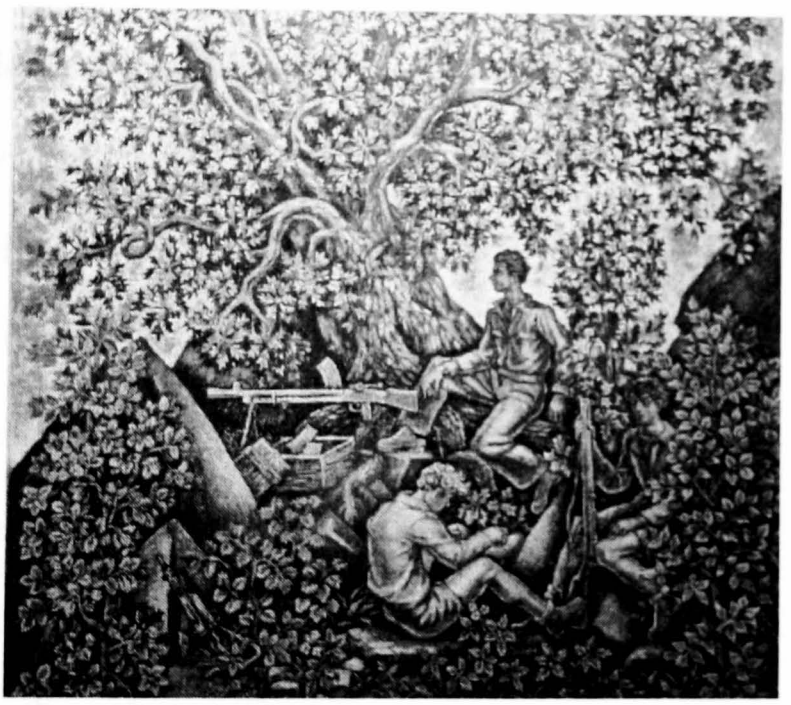

Figure 3 and Figure 4. Paintings by Jean Amblard located in the *salle des mariages* of Saint-Denis' *hôtel de ville* (December 2005). © Chris Pearson

A 1951 publication, *Les maquis de France,* reproduced Amblard's work for a wider audience and suggested that the paintings successfully recreated a sense of the forest as a site of resistance away from the forest itself. For Auguste Gillot, Saint-Denis' mayor and member of the Conseil National de la Résistance, they 'suddenly transported' the visitor 'to a forest of innumerable trees, where a

strange murmur seems to rise up, [comprised] of the wind mixing with the chirping of birds, the clanking of weapons, [and] men's voices.' Gillot praised Amblard's representation of the 'Arbres de Liberté' as 'witnesses of our people's battle for a radiant springtime.' [19] A poem by celebrated surrealist poet and communist resistance veteran Paul Eluard in the same publication again highlighted the interconnections between trees and maquisards. Eluard's poem suggested that during the Occupation the 'leaves of the trees moved in time with [the *maquisards*'] hearts.' For Eluard, Amblard's trees had 'same blood as man' and were the 'trees of the maquis, the trees of the resistance.' [20]

Poet Jacques Gaucheron dedicated his contribution to *Les maquis de France* to Amblard 'who celebrates the entry of trees into history.' Gaucherons's poem tells how a 'firm friendship arose between trees and men' during the Occupation, during which the 'assassins' (the German occupier) 'discovered the huge anger of the forest.' 'Shoulder to shoulder' men and trees fought and defeated the occupier. Such was their cooperation that the enemy soldier who fell in the forest didn't know if his life had been taken by a resister or a tree acting in 'anger.' After the gruelling war years, 'our forests' now sing the names of resistance heroes through their branches and guard their memory. For Gaucheron it is in the trees that 'glory is forever inscribed.' [21] Even if we are not supposed to take Gaucheron's poem literally, it still portrays a tight bond between resisters and the forest milieu and suggests that memories of resistance reside in and are perpetuated by the forest.

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[19] Auguste Gillot in Jean Amblard, Auguste Gillot, Paul Eluard, Elsa Triolet, and Jacques Gaucheron, *Les maquis de France* (Paris: Les Éditions cercle d'art, 1951).
[20] Paul Eluard [untitled] in *Les maquis de France*.
[21] Jacques Gaucheron, 'Les maquis de France,' in *Les Maquis de France*.

Amblard's paintings and their accompanying poems suggest that even for communist intellectuals in a northern Parisian suburb the forest was an evocative and effective imaginative device through which to remember and emanate resistance memories. Elsewhere, forests and trees were represented as suitable resting places for those who died combating Nazism. H. Boute-Kerollier's 1955 poem 'La forêt de M…' evoked the leaves that 'scattered a delicate incense in the mausoleum forest' where *maquisards* lay buried. [22] Boute-Kerollier's poem portrayed the forest as a calm, temple-like resting place fit for the patriotic heroes of the Republic.

As in the aftermath of the First World War, trees are used to remember the dead of the Second World War. [23] For instance, at the Bouloris cemetery on the edge of the Esterel state forest in the Var, children have planted a tree to remember the dead (figure five).

Figure 5. Plaque at the Bouloris cemetery, Var (March 2005). © Chris Pearson

[22] H. Boute-Kerollier, 'La forêt de M…' in *Visages de France: les preux du maquis* (Paris: Éditions Debresse, 1955), 37. This collection of poems won the Académie Stanislas' Prix du Souvenir in 1963. See http://www.academie-stanislas.org/Table-Memoires.htm#table1.

[23] As Tamara Whited notes, after the First World War, the Association Nationale et Industrielle du Bois played up the 'linkages between planting trees and remembering the war' to improve the 'national patrimony' for which Frenchmen had sacrificed themselves and to 'embellish' the land in which they had died. *Forests and Peasant Politics*, 189.

Forests, however, could stir controversial memories about the war. When, during a parliamentary debate in September 1981, Prime Minster Pierre Mauroy suggested that unemployed youths could be deployed to restore France's forests, a RPR député, Robert-André Vivien called out "Maréchal, nous voilà!" The cry of "Marshal, here we are!" alluded to the Chantiers de la Jeunesse's forestry work and shows that in this case Vichy's appropriation of the forest overshadowed that of the resistance. [24]

On the whole, however, monuments and other memorial devices continued the associations developed between landscapes and resistance during wartime France. *Maquis* and forests served as natural allies during the war and are remembered as such, but they have also become a means for preserving and perpetuating resistance memories. *Maquisards*, however, took to forests and *maquis* not just for the shelter provided by bushes and trees, but because the vegetation often covered hilly or mountainous terrain. In chapter five I stressed how mountains served as a refuge and military base for *maquisards*. As a consequence, they have become heavily associated with resistance memories.

Mountains of memory

Mountains stand tall, literally and metaphorically, in French memorial landscapes of the Second World War. The Glières and Oisans alpine massifs are recognised as important sites of resistance, as is Mont Mouchet in the Auvergne where 6,000 *maquisards* gathered and were subsequently attacked by German

[24] Rousso, *Vichy Syndrome*, 185.

forces in June 1944. As a consequence, this 'grandiose and moving landscape' (in the words of the Musée de la Résistance du Mont-Mouchet's webpage), has been turned into a national symbol and memorial to resistance. [25]

Of all the nation's mountain ranges the Vercors has become most heavily associated with France's resistance heritage and memories. [26] Philippe Mestre, Ministre des Anciens Combattants et Victimes de Guerre, argued in 1994 that 'among all the sites,' the 'magnificent and bloody' Vercors stood out. [27] As Anne Sgard suggests, the war brought the Vercors out of 'anonymity to make it one of the symbols of the resistance.' [28]

Why does the Vercors stand out in France's memorial landscape? One reason is that the Vercors was the setting for an act of large-scale armed resistance against the German occupier. In the words of General de Lattre de Tassigny, it was in the Vercors that France 'made real war.' [29] Another factor behind the Vercors' powerful symbolism is undoubtedly the striking topography of the massif. As historian Henri Amoroux suggested, the Vercors was a 'tragedy that strikes the imagination for the men's sacrifice as well as [for] the almost spiritual décor amongst which [the events] took place.' [30]

Early resistance accounts and memoirs constructed the Vercors itself as an integral part of the resistance and remember it as an ally. According to Puech

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[25] Musée de la Résistance du Mont-Mouchet webpage, http://www.tourismorama.com /PAGE_INFO/4342_1.htm, assessed 9 May 2006.

[26] Although the Vercors is remembered for resistance, it is also important to bear in mind that it is also portrayed as a symbol of Nazi barbarity and French victimhood. Referring to the "martyred village" of Oradour-sur-Glane where German soldiers set fire to the town and massacred its inhabitants, Gilles Vergnon notes that Vassieux-en-Vercors has became something of an 'Oradour drômois.' *Vercors*, 125. For more on Oradour itself, see Farmer, *Martyred Village*.

[27] Philippe Mestre, Preface, in Parc Naturel Régional du Vercors brochure, *Site national historique de la résistance en Vercors* [n.d.].

[28] Anne Sgard, 'Paysages du Vercors,' 63.

[29] Quoted in Joesph La Picirella, *Témoignages sur le Vercors Drôme et Isère* (Lyon: Imprimerie Rivet 1969), 383.

[30] Quoted in Vergnon, *Vercors*, 9.

'the entire massif resisted'; the Vercors, 'kingdom of grass and domain of the forest, offered its refuge and the assistance of its peasants.' And after the German attack and reprisals the 'fortress' of the Vercors was crowned with a 'painful halo' (*auréole douloureuse*). For Puech, nature joined humans in the painful experience of destruction and death. The tree roots sunk into the soil 'saturated with blood' and the 'wind quivered with the rustling of leaves and the groans of the dead.' [31] Lieutenant Stephen also suggested that the Vercors had acted as a willing accomplice during the war, addressing it thus:

> You did your best... you kept your promises as much as you could. You defended us, you nourished us, you hid us... To the best of your ability, you opposed the invader with the barriers of your rocks, the gulfs of your gorges, the thickets of your woods, and even when the skies betrayed you, you spilt your blood and you didn't abandon us. Your forest guarded us and the dead, whom we left on your soil, sleep fraternally with your martyrs. [32]

The personification of the Vercors (addressed in the familiar "tu" form) adds to the sense that the mountain landscape should be remembered and recognised as an ally in resistance.

The construction of the Vercors as a natural ally and partner-in-resistance, empowered resistance veterans who wanted to turn the mountains themselves into a symbol of armed resistance. In 1948, Pierre Tenant argued that the Vercors, a region that had endured so much destruction and seen the deaths of 'seven hundred martyrs' on its soil, 'must remain in the history of our country as one of the most beautiful symbols of the will (*volonté*) of the French

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[31] Puech, *Montagne des sept douleurs*, 12-3, 33.
[32] Stephen, *Vercors*, 178.

resistance.' For Tenant, the 'amount of blood spilt has made these mountains sacred land, [which] should be now be respected as a sanctuary where the flame of our liberty was relit and as one of the cradles of the [French] renaissance.' [33] Writing almost forty years later, Albert Darier asserted that the 'land of the Vercors will forever symbolise a refuge for a combat and sacrifice.' [34] And as one former *maquisard* told *Le Journal du Dimanche*, the wind that continues to blow through the Vercors is, for him, 'the breath of liberty.' [35] Such was the belief that the Vercors' topography was synonymous with resistance that Pierre Dalloz opposed plans to build a new memorial in the 1970s as 'the Vercors is itself a monument, the most grandiose of monuments.' [36]

It is hardly unexpected that former resistance fighters fashioned the Vercors into a symbol of freedom, armed resistance, and patriotic sacrifice. But the higher echelons of the French state have done the same thing. During a speech given as part of the sixtieth anniversary commemorations in Vassieux-en-Vercors, the then French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin stated that he had come to the 'heroic plateau' to 'pay the homage due to all the resisters...of this place, which is so emblematic of their values, their courage, and their historical role.' [37]

The close association created between the Vercors and resistance is reproduced in memorials which mimic the form of the landscape. At the village of Malleval, where ten civilians and twenty three resisters were killed during the

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[33] Tenant, *Vercors*, 216-17.
[34] Darier, *Tu Prendras Les Armes*, 479. *Aux Armes!* also fashioned the Vercors into a symbol of French resistance, arguing that 'its defeat was only a preface for the victory of France. *Aux Armes!* No. 10, July 1945, 3.
[35] Alexandre Duyck, 'C'était l'esprit Vercors.' *Le Journal du Dimanche*, 11 July 2004, 24.
[36] Quoted in Vergnon, *Vercors*, 187.
[37] Quoted in Gensi Hoxha. 'Hommage aux martyrs,' *Le Dauphiné Libéré*, 22 July 2004, 2.

German attack on 29 January 1944, the memorial's depiction of a reclining figure seemingly mirrors the shape of the cliff-face behind it (figure six).

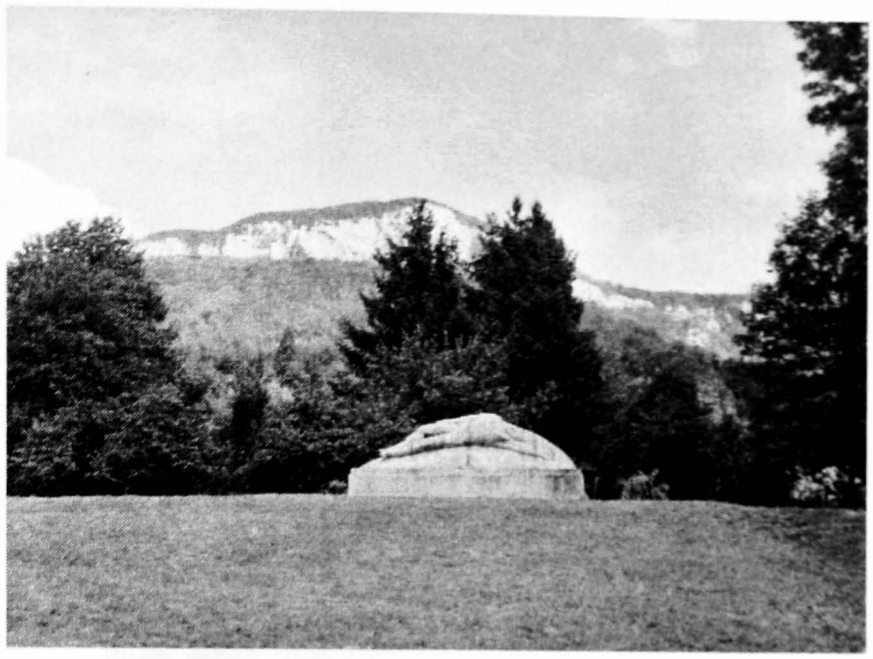

Figure 6. Resistance monument at Malleval in the Vercors (April 2005). © Chris Pearson

Similarly, the resistance memorial in centre of Gresse-en-Vercors imitates the imposing shape of nearby Mont-Aiguille (figure seven). [38] The way these memorials copy features of the landscape recalls James E. Young's observation that memorials 'suggest themselves as indigenous, even geological outcroppings in a national landscape. ' [39] In the case of the Vercors, it is not just memorials that are used to "naturalise" memory, as the massif itself has been fashioned into a symbol of resistance and a despository of memories.

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[38] This similarity is also noted by Olivier Vallade and Philippe Barrière. See Vallade *Des combats au souvenir,* 64; and Philippe Barrière, '"Au nom de la mémoire...": les associations grenobloises d'anciens combattants et victimes de guerre à la libération (1944-1947),' *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 205 (2002), 53.

[39] Young, *Texture of Memory*, 2. In contrast, certain memorials, such as Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin, actively jar with their surroundings, generating their 'own sense of a disquieting return, the sudden revelation of a previously buried past.' See James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 154.

Figure 7. Resistance memorial at Gresse-en-Vercors (July 2005). © Chris Pearson

Moreover, the Vercors is constructed as a protector of memory. During the war, the Vercors acted as a refuge for the *maquisards* who gathered among its cliffs and forests. In the postwar era, the landscape is conferred the task of preserving and perpetuating resistance memories and values. According to Sgard, the "natural fortress" metaphor is now employed to protect the 'national values' embodied in resistance history. [40] Representations of the Vercors as a "natural fortress," which echo the rhetoric of the Plan Montagnards, have been present throughout the memorialization process. In 1945, Puech described the Vercors as a 'fortress' of which the 'geographical configuration... made it an immense, naturally distinct [military] camp,' while Stephen argued that the 'precipices, cliffs, and gorges of this magnificent and proud area' ensured that the Vercors

[40] Sgard, *Paysages du Vercors*, 68.

was 'impregnable for two years.' As such, it was a 'beautiful natural fortress.' [41] In addition, the main resistance veterans' association, the *Pionniers du Vercors*, proudly and publicly evoked the fortress-like qualities of Vercors with its 'almost impenetrably high forests, its deep rock and cliff faces,' lending 'itself admirably to the role of protector.' [42]

Natural fortress imagery has endured well beyond the immediate postwar period. The Parc Naturel Régional du Vercors (PNRV), introducing itself in the pages of the *Pionnier du Vercors* in 1974, described the area as 'an impervious fortress,' language that was sure to appeal to former maquisards. [43] Fortress imagery also surfaced during the planning stages of the SNHRV:

> The borders of the Vercors! Terribly abrupt and dominant. They impose their boldness and their rectitude over the surrounding valleys.
>
> The cliff faces drop straight down to the valleys. They attract the attention, they magnetise, they bewitch.
>
> It is not necessary to search any further for the reasons for resistance. It's there, inevitably, that one day or another, the beautiful and cruel tragedy of a rebellious people would unfold. It is there, obviously, that one of the most poetic and symbolic pages of French history would imprint itself onto the limestone and spruce trees. This territory is a natural fortress. [44]

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[41] Puech, *Montagne des sept douleurs*, 12, 32; and Stephen, *Vercors*, 9, 15.
[42] Amicale des Pionniers, *Mirreille*.
[43] *Le Pionnier du Vercors*, 30th anniversary special edition, 1974.
[44] 'Un site prédestiné,' in *Site national historique de la résistance en Vercors*, 17.

Similarly, Dominique Partenay of the PNRV suggested that one of the reasons why the French population identified the Vercors with resistance was its 'very particular territory which is [that of] a fortress.' [45]

Other writers have contributed to the prolongation of the natural fortress discourse. In 1978, Michael Pearson described the Vercors' 'sheer walls thousands of feet tall' whose 'immense, gaunt ramparts form a high, often endless skyline.' The 'huge plateau' in its centre lies 'enclosed within soaring cliffs' and 'can only be reached from the surrounding plains by a few, steep narrow roads that have been hewn and tunnelled from the mountain.' The Vercors represented an 'enormous natural citadel [that] was designed for drama.'[46] Furthermore, Paul Dreyfus entitles his book *Vercors: citadelle de la Liberté* and Arthur Layton Funk notes the Vercors' 'formidable cliffs' with its 'plateau so high, so well protected, and so inaccessible.' [47]

Resistance memorials also reinforce and perpetuate the "natural fortress" narrative. Philippe Barrière observes that the Pionniers du Vercors have largely succeeded in transcending the Vercors' diversity enabling them to speak 'of the Vercors, in the name of the Vercors.' One way in which they have done so is through their logo of a chamois astride the word "Vercors," which is a recurrent motif of the memorials and, as Barrière argues, 'practically functions as a label, a sign of quality, encompassing and equalising all the experiences (combats, martyrs, French, foreign, military, civilian) at the heart of the largest

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[45] Dominque Partenay, 'Le Projet de parc historique du Vercors,' in Georges Kantin and Gilles Manceron (eds.), *Les Échos de la mémoire: tabous et enseignement de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale* (Paris: Le Monde Éditions, 1991), 227.

[46] Michael Pearson, *Tears of Glory: The Betrayal of the Vercors 1944* (London: Macmillan, 1978), ix.

[47] Dreyfus, *Vercors: citadelle de la Liberté*; and Funk, *Hidden Ally*, 16. Writing in *Historia*, journalist Gérard Chauvy argued that the Vercors has an 'undeniable character of a natural bastion.' 'Le maquis a-t-il été trahi par les Alliés?' *Historia* 571 (July 1994), 6. Likewise, Olivier Vallade remarks on the fact that the Vercors offered itself as a 'veritable fortress.' *Des combats au souvenir*, 69.

"vercorienne" memory possible' (figure eight). [48] More recently, the SNHRV has sought to standardise resistance sites, proposing to plant a yew tree by the memorials to 'create an identical symbol for the whole massif.' [49] The standardisation and unification of memorials within the Vercors' cliffs is a physical way of giving credence to the "natural fortress" narrative; within the fortress all is homogenised and united.

Figure 8. Logo of the Pionniers du Vercors (February 2004). © Chris Pearson

A variety of factors explain the persistence of the "natural fortress" myth. For a start, it helps to bind memories of the *maquis* into a unified whole, thereby subsuming the diversity of experience and the tensions that existed between various *maquisards*. [50] In 1948, Tenant drew attention to what he considered to be the Vercors' unifying power; 'on this vast plateau, French people of all origin

[48] Barrière, '"Au nom de la mémoire..."' 47.
[49] 'Les lieux de mémoire,' in *Site national historique de la résistance en Vercors*, 30.
[50] Vergnon, *Vercors*, 92-5.

and of all opinion managed to come together and unify, with the sole ambition of escaping servitude.' This held a contemporary resonance for Tenant as he suggested that when divisions arise again, 'eyes should look up... towards those high places where the spirit of France blew.' [51]

Evoking the natural fortress not only helps strengthen this sense of unity but it also serves to surmount the massif's diversity. It was only in the early twentieth century that geographers marked out what we now consider to be the Vercors as a single, coherent space collapsing topographical, climatic, and administrative differences between north and south (see chapter five). Repeated mention of the "natural fortress" helps mark out the Vercors as a discrete, coherent space united in resistance, which can serve as a model for postwar France. [52]

As well as generating a sense of unity in the face of diversity, the "natural fortress" narrative helps to paper over the resistance's strategic errors and over-confidence in the massif's natural defences. Repeated reminders of the Vercors' "natural fortress" characteristics create the impression that resistance was inevitable and had to happen there. As a front page 1974 *Le Monde* article put it, 'certain landscapes have their destiny.' [53] Furthermore, some suggest that the Vercors' fortress-like qualities continue to explain why the *maquisards* considered it inaccessible to German forces. In its report on the sixtieth anniversary commemorations in the Vercors, *Le Dauphiné liberé* noted that

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[51] Tenant, *Vercors*, 216-17.

[52] There are hints, however, that tensions remained between the north and the south of the massif. A 1967 committee on regional development noted the 'ancient apathy' that exists between north and south. CACAN 19770105/14 Comité pour l'aménagement et l'expansion économique de la Région Rhône-Alpes, 'Parcs naturels régionaux, VIIb Le Vercors et ses Hauts-Plateaux, activités sportives et de détente,' 15 August 1967, 23.

[53] J. M Domenach, 'Il y a trente ans, la tragédie du Vercors résumait celle de toute la résistance armée,' *Le Monde*, 29 July 1974, 1.

'maquisards thought their fortress impenetrable. And, yesterday, among these grandiose landscapes some thought that they were right.' [54] The "natural fortress" narrative drowns out potential criticism of the Plans Montagnards and the military decisions taken during the summer of 1944.

Although memories of resistance have been repeatedly associated with the "natural fortress," the meanings attached to the fortress have not remained static. Not least, the rise of environmentalism in France has "greened" the "natural fortress." [55] During the war, the main purpose conferred on the Vercors was to shelter and protect *maquisards*. It is now called upon to safeguard their memory *and* protect the area's natural habitats and rural way of life. A 1967 report by a regional development committee observed how the Vercors' 'escarpments and cliffs' rise above the surrounding countryside leading some to describe it as a 'fortress.' The Vercors stands out and above 'the feverish and necessary activities of the towns and the plains. It constitutes an immense refuge of which, as far as possible, we must preserve the originality so that man [sic] can reconcile himself with nature [and experience] its relaxing character, beauty, silence, and peace.' [56]

Similarly, "natural fortress" imagery surfaced during the creation of the PNRV. Proposals for creating the Parc naturel régional described the Vercors as a 'limestone island standing above the plains,' a land of 'free men,' and the last 'bastion' of the northern pre-Alps. [57] It appears that such rhetoric is heavily influenced by the "natural fortress" narrative. To this day, the PNRV's publicity

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[54] Maryse Schoon-Gayet, 'Aux héros et martyrs du Vercors,' *Le Dauphiné Liberé*, 22 July 2004.
[55] On the emergence of French environmentalism, see Bess, *Light-Green Society*; and Joseph Szarka, *The Shaping of Environmental Policy in France* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002).
[56] Comité pour l'aménagement, 'Parcs naturels régionaux,' 14.
[57] CACAN 19770105/14 'Projet de charte du Parc Naturel Régional du Vercors, [n.d.].

continues to link fortress-like qualities with a discourse of environmental protection, proposing that within this 'veritable natural citadel of limestone... wooded plateaus and valleys shaped by agriculture, shelter a remarkable fauna and flora.' [58] In summary, as Sgard argues, the image of the "natural fortress" increasingly rests on its protection of 'preserved nature and mountain traditions.'[59]

Historian Philippe Hanus calls for the destruction of the "natural fortress" myth. [60] Yet it seems that this narrative continues to thrive. The fortress metaphor binds resistance memories to the landscape, as well as unifying and strengthening them. However, this alone has been deemed insufficient to guarantee the maintenance and transmission of memory to subsequent generations. The creators of memorials in the Vercors and elsewhere have therefore actively mobilised nature to perpetuate memories.

Appropriating nature

In his analysis of French First World War memorials, Daniel Sherman briefly highlights the aesthetic influence that nature exerts over monuments. Specifically, Sherman argues that the 'site of the Bargemon monument, in the hills of Haute Provence, lends it a dignity and power that go beyond its formal qualities.' [61] In a similar manner, certain Second World War monuments

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[58] Parc Naturel Régional du Vercors leaflet, *Terre d'accueil: le Parc Naturel Régional du Vercors, vif de nature, vivant de culture* (2001).
[59] Anne Sgard, 'L'invention d'un territoire,' *Un hors-série de l'Alpe: Vercors en questions* (2001), 50.
[60] Hanus argues that the Vercors has never been isolated from the rest of the world. Philippe Hanus 'Briser le mythe de la citadelle,' in *L'Alpe: Vercors en questions*, 17-18.
[61] Daniel J. Sherman, 'Art, Commerce, and the Production of Memory in France after World War I,' in John R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 193.

appropriate nature to heighten their aesthetic qualities and emotive effect. This appropriation of nature echoes both Vichy's and the resistance's mobilisation of forests, mountains, and other landscapes for rhetorical, practical, and imaginative reasons.

Nature can provide memorials with an aura of permanence, gravitas and solidity. This is particularly true for mountain landscapes, which also provide sublime views. The Mémorial du débarquement de Provence at Mont-Faron (inaugurated in 1964 by General de Gaulle) commands imposing views over Toulon and the Mediterranean. One reason that this military fort was chosen to host the memorial was the 'prestigious site and the extent of the view.' [62] As figure nine suggests, the visitor is more likely to remember the magnificent view than the somewhat dated exhibition inside the memorial.

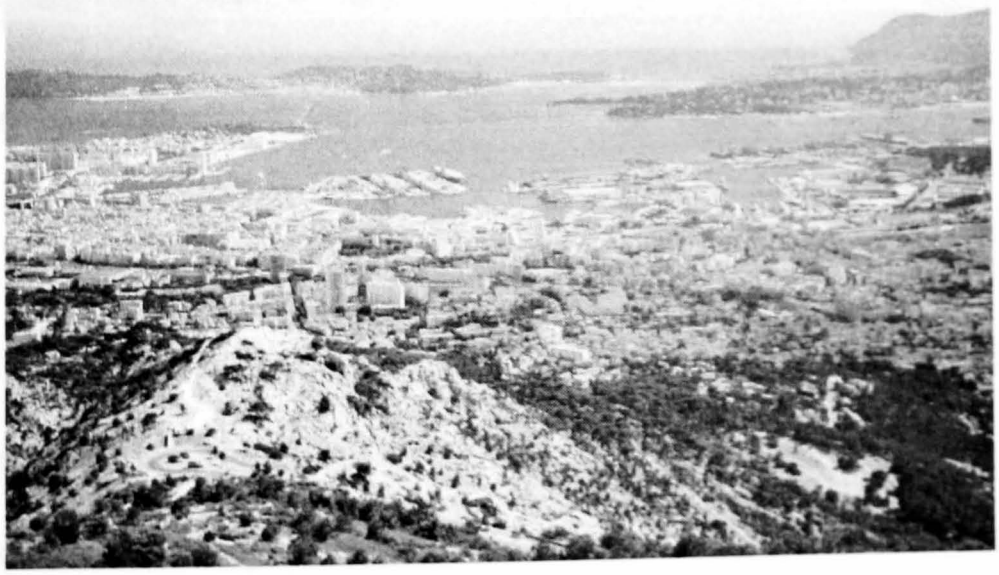

Figure 9. View from Mémorial du débarquement de Provence at Mont-Faron. (July 2005) © Chris Pearson

[62] See 'Mémorial du débarquement de Provence, Mont-Faron (83),' Chemins de mémoire website, http://www.cheminsdememoire.gouv.fr/page/affichelieu.php?idLieu=1354&id Lang=fr, viewed 9 June 2006. This text is also reproduced in the Secrétariat Général pour l'administration, Direction de la mémoire, du patrimoine et des archives, *Le memorial du débarquement de Provence, Toulon (Var)*, Collection "Mémoire de pierre" no. 8 [undated leaflet]. The memorial pays homage to French Army B which took part in the Allied landings of 14-15 August 1944 and is located at an altitude of 530 metres.

In a similar way to Mont-Faron, the view from the Gilioli memorial (named after its sculptor) near col de La Chau above Vassieux-en-Vercors gains much of its impact from its mountainside location and extensive views over the Vercors' *hauts plateaux* (figure ten).

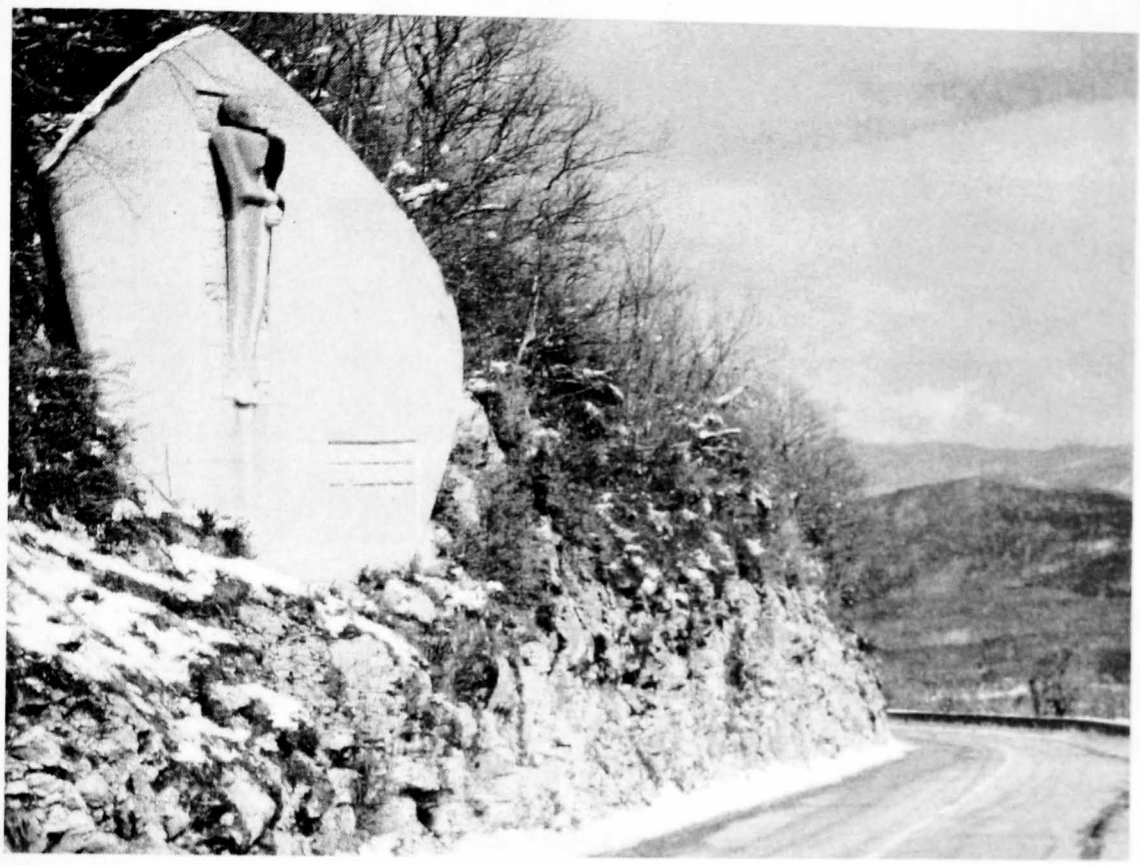

Figure 10. Gilioli memorial at col de La Chau (February 2004). © Chris Pearson

Although it could be argued that spectacular views divert attention away from the memorial itself, they arguably increase the emotive impact of the site and leave a lasting impression on the visitor.

Cemeteries inaugurated in the Vercors during the immediate postwar period use their location to augment their prestige and grandeur. For instance, the cemetery at Saint-Nizier-du-Moucherotte, situated on the site of sustained fighting between maquisards and German troops from 13 to 15 June 1944, offers the visitor 'one of the most beautiful panoramas in the Alps' (according to the official postcard). However, the layout of the cemetery (principally the location

of the plaque and flagpole) channels visitors' attention away from this view toward the imposing cliff faces of Le Moucherotte mountain (figure eleven).

Figure 11. Cemetery at Saint-Nizier-du-Moucherotte (February 2004). © Chris Pearson

These vertiginous rocks mirror the greyness of the cemetery whilst the mountain's green pines echo those of the cemetery. Mourners and other visitors to the site are invited to contemplate the *maquisard's* heroism and sacrifice against the rugged mountain backdrop, which arguably invests the resistance struggle with the romantic qualities associated with mountains. In addition, the cemetery's orientation towards Le Moucherotte recalls the "natural fortress" trope, reminding the visitor of the Vercors' destiny as a site of resistance.

The Nécropole de la Résistance at Vassieux-en-Vercors (inaugurated in 1948) appropriates its mountainous surroundings in a similar way. The cemetery's layout directs the visitor's gaze away from the tragedy that occurred

in the village toward the mountainous backdrop, while the evergreen trees in front of the wooden crosses remind the visitor that life continues thanks to the resistance's sacrifice. [63] Nature both inside and outside the cemetery at Vassieux-en-Vercors is crucial to this process. While the trees in front of the graves recall renewal, the mountain backdrop hints at the sublime. As David Schuyler argues, the development of rural cemeteries in the eighteenth and nineteenth century was, in part, a response to romanticism's belief that 'natural scenery had a positive impact on the mind,' and, in the cemetery context, could 'assuage grief and elevate the emotions.' [64] This is arguably the case at both the Saint-Nizier-du-Moucherotte and Vassieux-en-Vercors sites, where the majestic landscape echoes the magnitude of sacrifice and yet offers, perhaps, some solace in the beauty and apparent permanence of nature.

Landscape considerations have also influenced the location of other monuments in the Vercors. The Stations of the Cross memorials, which follow the route from Villard-de-Lans up to the ruined village of Valchevrière (destroyed during the German attack of 22 and 23 July 1944), capitalise on their surroundings to emphasis the supposedly spiritual dimension of death. Inaugurated in 1948 and funded through public subscription, these memorials represent the passion, sacrifice, and suffering of both Christ and the *maquisards*. The memorials are designed to maximise their natural surroundings and, consequently, not all of them are situated on sites where *maquisards* lost their lives. Instead, aesthetic factors influenced their location: 'so that the work is

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[63] As Morris argues, nature can act as a symbol of rejuvenation and regeneration in cemeteries. See 'Gardens "for ever England,"' 410-434.

[64] David Schuyler, 'The Evolution of the Anglo-American Rural Cemetery: Landscape Architecture as Social and Cultural History,' *Journal of Garden History* 4/3 (1984), 294.

beautiful, the most picturesque sites were chosen, and each oratory is adapted to the landscape.' [65]

Memorials inaugurated under the SNHRV continue this appropriation of nature to enhance their effect, such as the Rester-Résister 'garden of memory' by sculptor Emmanuel Saulnier in the centre of Vassieux-en-Vercors. In this memorial space rectangular panes of glass shoot up vertically from the ground, their number corresponding to that of the village's civilian deaths (figure twelve).

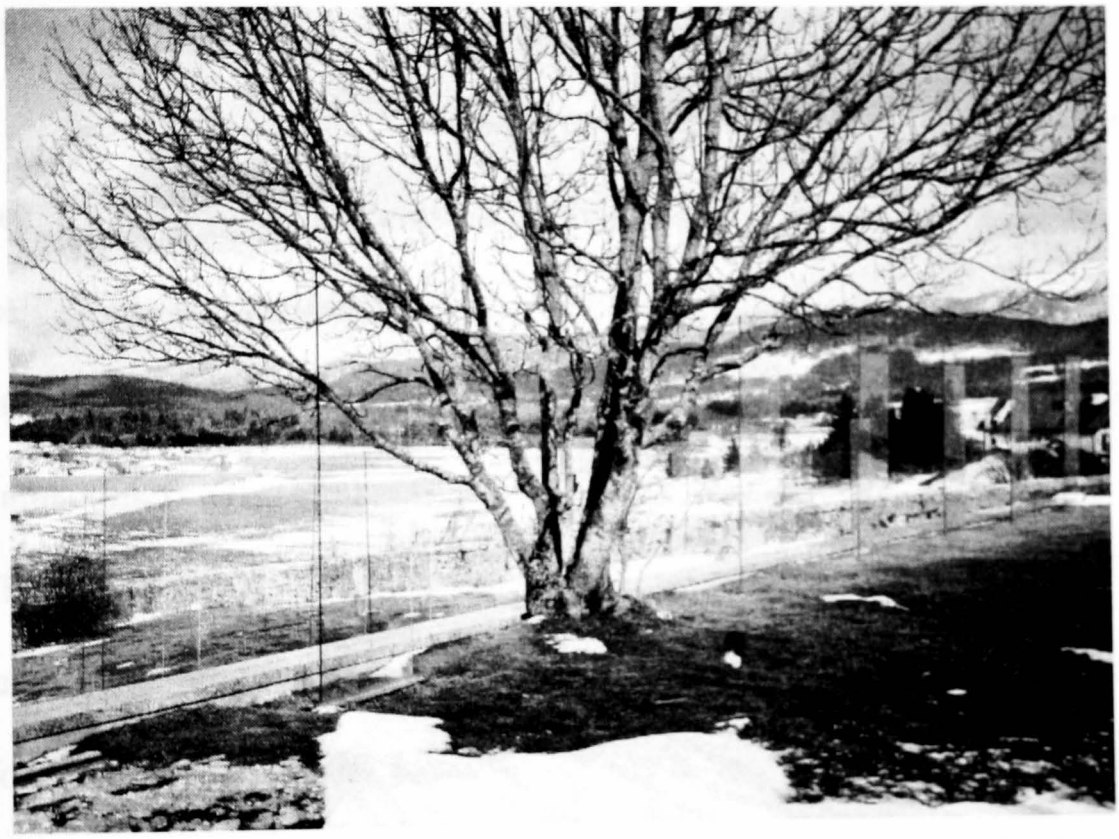

Figure 12. Rester-Résister "jardin de mémoire" by Emmanuel Saulnier, Vassieux-en-Vercors (February 2004). © Chris Pearson

As with many other Vercors memorials, nature is a sphere through which human loss is remembered and understood, as the purity of the martyrs' sacrifice is reflected in the landscape visible through the glass. A plaque outside the garden explains the panes' significance:

[65] M. Le Chanoine Jacques Douillet, *Valchevrière: le chemin de croix du Vercors* (Grenoble: MGR Vittoz, Évêque Auxiliaire, 1950), 3.

> Pane of glass: symbol of the fragility of life, so quickly shattered, so quickly destroyed…
>
> Pane of glass: symbol of the purity of the soul of the martyrs and their ideal.
>
> Pane of glass: symbol of transparency…. through which opens the image of the plateau where the stones and the wind recount – if one knows how to listen to them – a terrible and glorious history.

The idea that wind and stones can transmit memories to the passer-by is also suggested by Albert Darier who believes that in the Vercors 'the visitor is gripped… if they know how to listen to the extraordinary story told by the stones and the wind.' [66] However, it seems likely that not all visitors hear this story, as by themselves, the wind and the stones reveal nothing to the onlooker about the history of the maquis. Therefore, memorials, such as Rester-Résister, are needed to frame and contextualise the landscape's "stories" and "memories."

The Mémorial du Vercors at col de La Chau is the boldest attempt yet to incorporate nature into the memorialisation process. Although the site was partly chosen for its proximity to the Lente forest (evoking individual and collective resistance activity), no actual resistance-related events occurred at this location.[67] Instead the main consideration was the view offered by the site (figure thirteen).[68]

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[66] Darier, *Tu Prendras Les Armes*, 479.

[67] 'Site national historique de la résistance: les chemins de la Liberté,' http://www.vercors-net.com/dossiers/histoire/resistance.html, accessed 11 December 2003, 4. The memorial was funded by the European Union, the French state, the Rhône-Alpes region, and the Drôme and Isère départements. See Jeanne Morcellet, 'Le mémorial de Vassieux,' *Historia* 571 (July 1994), 36.

[68] 'Le Mémorial du col de la Chau,' *Site national historique de la résistance en Vercors.*

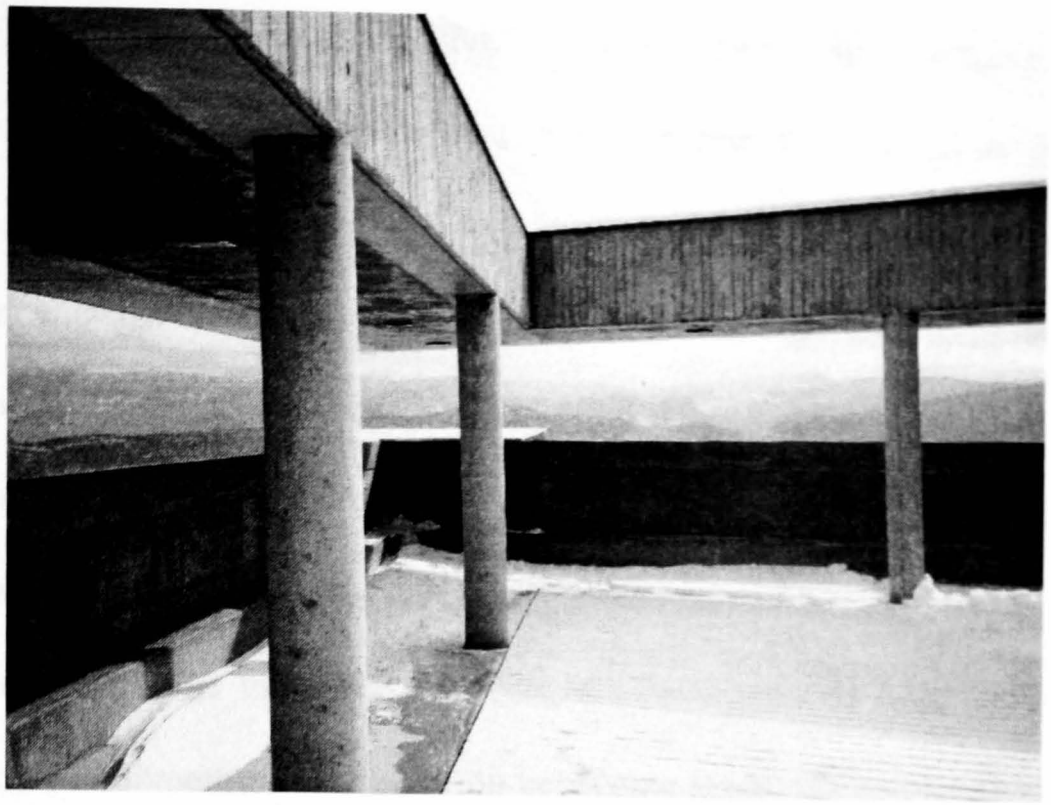

Figure 13. Viewing platform at col de La Chau memorial (February 2004). © Chris Pearson

The choice of this site, however, was not without controversy. Vassieux-en-Vercors's mayor accused the memorial's creators, the PNRV, of ignoring the needs of his village, whose wartime suffering justified it being 'granted the principal infrastructure' of the SNHRV. The mayor and town council protested the col de La Chau site, citing water supply difficulties, the 'rigour of the winter climate' at the site and its access difficulties, and the 'fatal exclusion' of Vassieux-en-Vercors from the 'tourist circuit.' Instead of the chosen site, the mayor suggested the memorial be built on a site above the Nécropole de la Résistance which was closer to the village and offered a more 'open' panorama than that of col de La Chau. [69] In the end, however, Vassieux-en-Vercors' municipal authorities accepted the col de La Chau site after the location was approved by a large majority of the PNRV's committee. [70]

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[69] AMVV Extrait du registre des délibérations du conseil municipal, 'Site National Historique de la Résistance: site de Vassieux-en-Vercors,' 3 August 1992, 1-2.

[70] The commune also received assurances that a memorial would be erected in the village itself (the eventual Rester-Résister garden of memory) and that the existing Musée de la Résistance

The determination of the PNRV to secure the col de La Chau site in the face of strong local opposition suggests how important the site and its view were to the memorial's conception. Moving beyond a conventional museum environment, the memorial directs the visitor through the cold, dark, and claustrophobic atmosphere of the exhibition rooms onto a balcony boasting spectacular views over the Vercors. This contrast between light and dark is a deliberate attempt to show the heroic/tragic elements of the Vercors' history. As the rationale for the memorial suggests, the 'exit towards light, a symbol of freedom, is a moment of confrontation between a landscape and its history... the memorial reminds us of the two most contradictory aspects of our humanity; darkness and light.' [71] For visitors, the 'bright light' is supposed to act as a 'symbol of liberty.' [72] As these comments show, the memorial actively deploys the Vercors' landscape as part of its strategy to transmit resistance memories and radiate their moral and political "values."

The col de La Chau memorial attests to a deeper connection between memorials and the natural world, due, in part, to the passing of the resistance generation and anxiety that their memories would subsequently fade. [73] While earlier monuments strove to act as permanent reminders of resistance and

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would be maintained. See AMVV Extrait du registre des délibérations du conseil municipal, 'Site National Historique,' 23 July 1993, 1-2.

[71] 'Pour ne pas oublier,' in *Site national historique de la résistance en Vercors*. This text is reproduced in Parc Naturel Régional du Vercors, *Le mémorial de la Résistance en Vercors* [undated leaflet].

[72] 'Site national historique de la résistance: les chemins de la Liberté,' 4. According to its creators, the memorial is intended to concentrate 'on the analysis and expression of human behaviour' rather than an 'exposition of historical facts' so as to 'underline the universal value of the Vercors' history.' See 'Pour ne pas oublier,' and 'Le Mémorial du col de la Chau,' in *Site national historique de la résistance en Vercors*. Vergnon criticises the memorial's lack of historical content, its emphasis on contemporary concerns, and its reinterpretations of resistance history. *Vercors*, 190.

[73] The publication of *Le Vercors raconté par ceux qui l'ont vécu* is a sign of resistance veterans' desire to relate their experiences. A major justification put forward for the SNHRV's creation was that the revamped memorial space of the Vercors would 'transmit the memory [of resistance] to those generations who didn't experience the events.' Partenay, 'Projet de parc,' 227. See also 'Pour ne pas oublier,' in *Site national historique de la résistance en Vercors*.

martyrdom through more conventional monumental forms, the sites created and transformed as part of the SNHRV seek to integrate themselves into the natural landscape in new and deeper ways. The very form of the col de La Chau memorial is designed to blend into nature; its shape follows the curve of the combe and is covered with local vegetation (junipers and pines) [figure fourteen].[74]

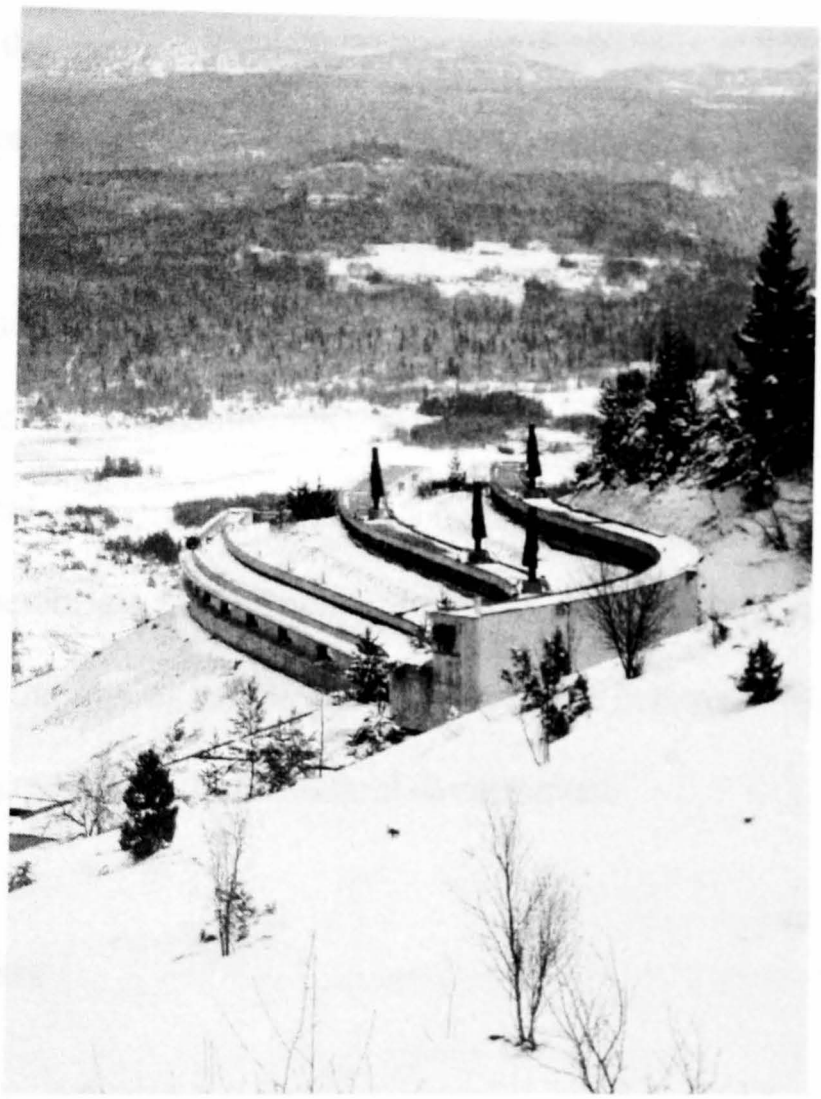

Figure 14. The memorial at col de La Chau (February 2004) © Chris Pearson

By anchoring itself in the landscape, the memorial tries to re-create an experience of *maquisard* life for its visitors. According to its website, the memorial's concealment in the landscape is supposed to reflect the way that resisters were forced to hide themselves and its isolation is intended to 'incite'

[74] 'Le mémorial du col de la Chau,' in *Site national historique de la Résistance en Vercors*.

the visitor to meditate on the site's significance. Furthermore, the proximity to the forest and its supposedly strategic location are designed to 'plunge' the visitor into the *maquisard* experience. Overall, this isolated site is supposed to 'disorient,' 'question,' and provoke thoughts and memories. The memorial was also planned as a demanding experience; visitors must make a conscious decision to reach the site as it is located off the main road, and, once there, the memorial requires 'effort' from the visitor. [75]

Arguably, the memorial's engagement with the landscape is an attempt to preserve resistance memories in the ground itself and produce a visceral experience for the visitor to make memories more authentic and reflexive. In his discussion of French Holocaust monuments, James Winchell argues that recent memorials try to realise a dynamic, sensual experience for the visitor by creating a sense of 'corporeal suffering,' rather than a more passive, visual encounter with the past. [76] The memorials that Winchell describes are mostly located in urban areas. In contrast, the one at col de La Chau seeks to achieve a similar effect through a deep engagement with the natural environment.

Experiencing nature

The idea that sites were to be visited and experienced emerged straight after the war. In the Vercors, memorial inaugurations and anniversaries brought mourners and others into the massif and highlighted its symbolic significance. Yet it was not just mourners and pilgrims that officials and local communities

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[75] 'Le memorial,' Site National Historique de la Résistance en Vercors website, http://www.memorial-vercors.fr/index2.html, accessed 22 June 2006.
[76] James Winchell, 'Holocaust Memorials in France: A Walking Tour for the Body-at-Risk,' *Contemporary French Civilisation* 20/2 (1996): 305.

hoped would visit the massif. Recognition was accorded to the importance of tourism to the region. A 1945 Génie Rural report argued that the resistance, combined with civilian suffering, had given the Vercors a 'symbolic renown abroad which could be used in the future to develop tourism,' while in 1951 the Drôme's Prefect identified "resistance tourism" as a way of developing the massif, in particular the Southern Vercors. [77] The concerns of Vassieux-en-Vercors' mayor over the location of the col de La Chau memorial in 1993 also suggest that "resistance tourism" remains an important source of revenue for local communities (the mayor hinted that towns in the northern half of the massif, such as Lans, which took the "en-Vercors" suffix after the war, only did so once they realised the economic benefits of "resistance tourism"). [78]

Visiting sites, however, is not just a question of tourist revenue. Instead, visitors to war-related sites are intended to glean historical lessons and take away messages with contemporary resonance. In the case of the Vercors, General Koenig, commander of the Free French forces during the D-Day landings, considered the mountainous landscape, dotted with memorials and cemeteries, as 'an astonishing lesson for the young people who visit it.' [79] Moreover, in 1994, Mestre highlighted the lessons of the Vercors, imploring his fellow citizens to visit the massif:

> Come to the Vercors.

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[77] CHAN F [10] 7103 R.E. Houdet, 'Note pour M. le Ministre,' 6 June 1945, 1; and Vergnon, *Vercors*, 191. As Sgard points out, wartime events meant that previously little-visited sites, such as Vassieux-en-Vercors and the Luire cave, became tourist destinations. Sgard, 'Paysages du Vercors,' 67.

[78] Extrait du registre, 'Site National Historique de la Résistance,' 3 August 1992, 1. For a wider discussion on why tourists visit war and genocide-related sites, see John Lennon and Malcolm Foley, *Dark Tourism* (London: Continuum, 2000).

[79] Quoted in Général Giraud, 'Le Vercors, il y a 60 ans,' *Les Cahiers des troupes de montagne* 36 (March 2004), 6.

> Understand the close links which unite this exceptional territory and its fighters.
>
> Understand what we owe to those who, up there, gave everything.
>
> May their memory help the French people to recognise the founding values of the Republic.
>
> May the memory of the Vercors inspire goodwill, of which peace has so much need. [80]

In this passage, the Vercors is fashioned into a lesson in republican values and the importance of peace.

However, the landscape does not necessarily reveal its history by itself. As *Les Cahiers des troupes de montagne* highlights, visitors often fail to spot or realise the significance of the numerous 'plaques and steles disseminated in nature.' [81] Veterans and other guardians of memory now try to guide and control visits to Second World War sites, explaining their history and contemporary significance. Signposts direct car-based tourists around the 'Open-Air Museum of the Battle of Normandy' and in the Vercors the SNHRV introduced 'Les Chemins de la Liberté ('The route of freedom') comprising of eight main sites. [82] Elsewhere, a hike organised by the Union Sportive de l'Enseignement du Premier Degré for approximately 1,000 school children in the Bessillon mountains on 2 April 2005 included a talk given by resistance veterans in front

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[80] Quoted in *Site national historique de la résistance en Vercors*.

[81] Giraud, 'Le Vercors, il y a 60 ans,' 6. This edition of *Les Cahiers des troupes de montagne* presents photos and a brief description of the Vercors' numerous memorials, alongside their location on a map.

[82] These sites are the cemetery at Saint-Nizier-du-Moucherotte, the ruined village of Valchevrière, Malleval, Vassieux-en-Vercors, the cemetery at Vassieux-en-Vercors, Pas de l'Aiguille, the Luire cave, and the Cour des Fusillés at La Chapelle-en-Vercors. See SNHRV leaflet 'Les Chemins de la Liberté [n.d.]. For the Normandy trail see Lennon and Foley, *Dark Tourism*, 124.

of the aforementioned memorial. The outing was presented as an opportunity for the schoolchildren to learn about both natural and resistance history. [83]

Like memorials located in urban areas, the surrounding landscape has a bearing on visitors' experiences of rural sites. As John Lennon and Malcolm Foley argue, post-1918 battlefield tours to Northern France and Flanders encouraged visitors to 'envisage the scene and tactical problems from within the landscape itself, thereby offering the countryside as a perpetual and living museum of the war.' [84] Furthermore, David Lloyd suggests that for visitors to the First World War sites, 'remembering was not a passive activity. They assumed that at particular places and moments it was possible to renew or recapture something of the past.' [85] In a similar way, guidebooks and organised tours mobilise the natural environment as a way of recreating historical experiences and providing a direct link to the past for the Second World War, thereby creating living memory and transforming visitors' perceptions of the past. As during war, therefore, the experience of being in nature is designed to have a positive, transformative effect on individuals and, by extension, society in general. [86]

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[83] Created in 1939, the USEP is an association that organises sportive and other educational activities for schoolchildren. For the Bessillon day out, see V.T. 'Mille jeunes randonneurs au Bessillon,' *Var Matin*, 3 April 2005.

[84] Lennon and Foley, *Dark Tourism*, 124.

[85] Lloyd, *Battlefield Tourism*, 277. Lloyd also notes how one guidebook to Gallipoli informed visitors how 'vividly you see all that [the soldiers] saw, the grandeur of Nature, the glimmer of the sea! You can still smell the Dardanelles expedition, and tread in old footsteps which have been worn away' (117).

[86] This memorial strategy is not restricted to France. Petri J. Raivo draws attention to a new breed of simulacrum and replica landscapes which try to re-create the experience of war in Finland between 1939 and 1945 and are 'made to manifest, maintain, and support the memory of war, and thus the national narrative, for the generations that do not have any personal experience of the wars concerned.' Petri J. Raivo, '"This is where they fought": Finnish war landscapes as a national heritage,' in Timothy G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper (eds.), *Commemorating War: The Politics of Memory* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2000), 161-2.

In contrast to the trenches of the First World War, sites of resistance have not necessarily left a lasting mark on the landscape. Indeed, the site may be an unmarked footpath, field, or farmhouse. Consequently, guidebooks produced by local walking and resistance organisations lead visitors around these disparate sites and encourage them to read the landscape, with the aim that they come to understand its resistance history. A guidebook on "resistance walks" in the Gâtinais proposes that this area of Paris' 'green belt,' which was once 'ideal' terrain for resistance activity, is now 'ideal for relaxation and rambling.' Armed with the guidebook, walkers discover the caves where maquisards hid, the fields where they recuperated weapons, and the farms in which they sought refuge. [87] Local resistance veterans approve of the guidebook as there is 'no better way... to discover the Resistance' than to go 'step by step' to the sites where 'so many resisters fought for our liberty with courage and often heroism.' The guidebook highlights the lesson to be had from this "resistance rambling," namely an understanding of the importance of defending freedom. [88]

In his introduction to a guidebook produced for the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence *département*, former resister Fernand Tardy argues that *maquisards* and hikers tread the same paths, but these routes had different functions; the paths that allow ramblers to discover nature and feel at one with themselves were once used by *maquisards* to find refuge and carry out raids on German troops. According to Tardy, the experience of being outdoors enables the walker to

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[87] The guidebook encourages ramblers to think of 'all the young men who lived [and] often suffered in the cold or under the rain, in fear and in hope, among these same copses, villages, [and] paths.' Association pour l'aménagement harmonieux des vallées de l'Orvanne et du Lunain, *Maquis en Gâtinais: la Résistance dans les vallées de l'Orvanne et du Lunain et les alentours pendant la seconde guerre mondiale* (Voulox: AHVOL, 1994), 7, 125. A "Fighters' Trail" has also been created at the battlefield of Ilomantsi in Finland. See Raivo, '"This is where they fought,"' 158.
[88] Ibid. 5.

remember the resistance's struggle and sacrifice: 'perhaps each time that you gaze upon nature's beauty you will spare a thought for those who allowed you to walk these paths as a free and happy man [sic].' In such a way, Tardy hopes, will memories of resistance be perpetuated. [89] The act of walking and being in nature is intended to produce active, "authentic" memories of resistance.

Elsewhere, the physical and sensual experience of being in the great outdoors is linked to resistance memories in a more strenuous fashion. In 1994, "Association Le Chemin de la Liberté," in consultation with veterans' associations, inaugurated a way-marked "freedom trail" following one of the most frequented escape routes across the Pyrenees. The aim was to 'perpetuate and transmit' memories of the resisters, refugees, and Allied airmen who fled France for Spain. [90] Each July, a four-day 'memory-walk' of up to 120 French and non-French hikers takes place complete with ceremonies in honour of the escapees and their guides. [91]

As its organisers stress, the hike is a strenuous one conducted at high altitude over testing terrain (several hikers have been helicoptered off the mountain during recent expeditions). The hardships walkers suffer are portrayed as a link to the past:

> If the weather is bad as it was during our trek of July 2002 with raging storms, lashing rain and then a blizzard at 2242 metres, the sensation is not excitement but a fair amount

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[89] Fernand Tardy, 'Perpétuer la mémoire,' in Hélène Vésian and Claude Gouron, *Les chemins de la Liberté: sur les pas des résistants de Haute-Provence* (Château-Arnoux: ADRI AMRID, 2004), 14-17.

[90] 'Le Chemin de la Liberté,' http://www.ville-st-girons.fr/bienvenue/actualities/chemin_liberte/chemin_01.htm, 1-6, accessed 14 June 2006. The route stretches from St-Giron in the Ariège département to Esterri in Spain. For more on escape routes across the Pyrenees see Eychenne, *Montagnes de la peur et de l'ésperance*.

[91] The success of the Chemin de la Liberté means that plans are underway to open three more way-marked trails on former escape routes. See 'Le Chemin de la Liberté'; and Scott Goodall, 'Le Chemin de la Liberté: WWII escape route to Spain,' http://www.ariege.com/histoire.chemin.html, accessed 9 December 2003.

> of misery! In other words, as it was back in 1943-44 for evading aircrew who had no boots, no food, no warm clothes. All they had was youth on their side and a desperate desire to cross the peaks and see their families again. [92]

The organisers do not claim an exact replication of the war experience. Nonetheless, they suggest that there are similarities between wartime and contemporary expeditions through the mountains; 'it's a bloody hard challenge and one hopes that some of the history rubs off on the participants.' [93]

Although it is unwise to speculate on how different hikers experience and understand the Chemin de la Liberté's history, it does seem that the physical act of walking and the demanding mountain environment renders the past more immediate. In the words of one British hiker; 'from the onset of the walk, thoughts of what the passeurs and escapers had to tolerate during their (hopefully) successful passage to neutral Spain and freedom from the Nazis, came to mind continually. ... We thought we were going to have it hard; [but] we had relative luxury when all said and done.'[94] For another participant, the physical and mental challenges encountered on the walk enabled him to imagine and experience some of the wartime hardships:

> What must it have been like for those who done [sic] this for real? They had no Gore-Tex jackets, carried little food, and had no idea where they were. Most of them never even had a proper pair of boots and would be crossing at night. The privations I had

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[92] 'Le Chemin de la Liberté 2006 – Instructions,' WW2 Escape Lines Memorial Society website. http://www.conscript-heroes.com/escapelines/Chemin%20Instructions.html, accessed 14 June 2006.
[93] Scott Goodall quoted in David Sharrock, 'Celebrating the Mountain Trail to Wartime Freedom,' *The Times*, 13 July 2004, 16.
[94] Derrick Williams, 'Chemin de la Liberté 2005 – another view,' WW2 Escape Lines Memorial Society website, http://www.conscriptheroes.com/escapelines/Chemin %202005%20Derrick% 20Williams.html, accessed 14 June 2006, 2.

> suffered on this small trip pale in comparison to the feats of those who travelled the same route I was now on during the war. Who was I to grumble as I trudged through the dirty snow. [95]

The same participant also recalled how after hearing the Chant des Partisans during the ceremonies held at memorials along the route, the song kept returning to him as he walked, 'a constant companion to help me through the miles, as if I was still being helped by passeurs long dead.' [96] In this case, the demanding act of walking through the same landscape provided an imaginative and physical link to the past.

However, the creators of guidebooks, walking tours, and memorials cannot guarantee that all (indeed any) visitors will understand the experience in the intended way. As a consequence, the lessons derived from resistance history can be lost or subverted. Although nature is mobilised to create living memories of resistance, picturesque landscapes contain different meanings and expectations. In the case of the Vercors, the celebrated natural environment attracts visitors to the area who may be more interested in leisure activities than resistance history. [97]

Tourism has long existed in the Vercors, but meeting the demands of modern tourism does not always go hand-in-hand with a reverence for *maquis* heritage. A cross-country ski kiosk now sits on the route of the Stations of the Cross and husky dog rides are available 200 meters above col de la Chau during

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[95] Stewart Stirling, 'Chemin de la Liberté 2005 – another view,' WW2 Escape Lines Memorial Society website, http://www.conscript-heroes.com/escapelines/Chemin%20 2005%20Stewart%20Sterling.html, accessed 14 June 2006, 4.
[96] Ibid. 2.
[97] Sgard suggests that areas of "moyenne montagne," such as the Vercors, now act as sites of relaxation for stressed urbanites. 'Paysages du Vercors,' 80.

the winter.[98] In Provence, meanwhile, a farmhouse once used as a shelter by *maquisards* is suggested as a 'agreeable resting point' for hikers, and a beach where Allied forces landed in 1944 has became a tourist spot (see figure fifteen).[99]

Figure 15. 'Plage du debarquement' at Le Dramont near Saint-Raphaël (March 2005). © Chris Pearson

At times, the differing priorities of tourists and former *maquisards* clash directly. Publicity material now promotes the Luire cave (where German troops murderously disbanded a maquis field hospital) on the basis of its resistance

[98] Tourism has intensified in recent years in line with its increasing importance to the local economy, especially in the more economically disadvantaged southern region. Louis Reboud and Michel Wullschleger, 'Les leçons d'un recensement,' *L'Alpe: Vercors en questions*, 12-15.
[99] 'Les sites naturel de Provence – le Plateau de Siou Blanc,' http://www.lemidi.com/guide/SITES/SIOUBLANC, accessed 6 December 2004, 1-2.

history, its spectacular rock formations, and its 'real and savage beauty.' [100] The site's speleological and resistance elements sit uneasily together according to *maquis* veteran Paul Jansen, who argues that the demands of tourism, such as improving access to the cave and providing parking facilities, threaten to transform this 'sacred' place. He believes that 'the comparison between the rare photos taken at the time and those of today show that the changes to the cave have removed the character which history conferred onto it.' He reports that some tourists (presumably hoping for a taste of authentic resistance history) are disappointed by the state of the cave and feel 'tricked.' [101] Jansen's views are not without reason. The cave's sacredness and solemnity are somewhat undermined by the kiosk toward the rear of the cave selling guided tours and postcards (figure sixteen).

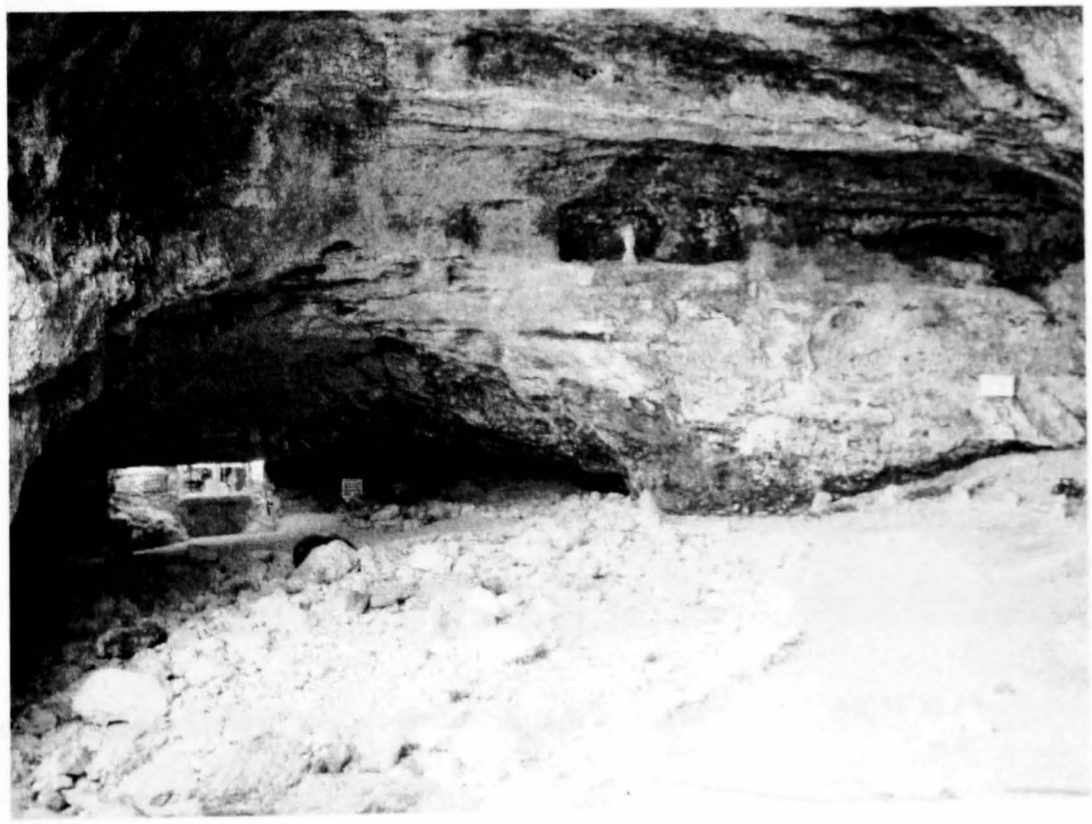

Figure 16. Luire cave with kiosk to the left and resistance plaque to the right (July 2004). © Chris Pearson

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[100] 'Grotte de la Luire: site classé,' [undated leaflet]. For Puech, the site is a sacred one, where it is almost as if the cave 'remembers' the massacre and 'sheds tears' for the victims. Puech, *Montagne des sept douleurs*, 75.

[101] Paul Jansen, 'Un lieu sacré: la grotte de la Luire,' *Le Pionnier du Vercors*, nouvelle série, No. 76, September 1991, 1.

Elsewhere in the massif, a former maquisard bitterly recounts how he came across the following message left by a tourist in a refuge near the Pas de l'Aiguille memorial (figure seventeen); 'very pleased to come here to admire this magnificent landscape. Shame it's spoilt by this monument.' Berating this visitor's lack of respect for the eight bodies that lie at the site, and noting how the memorial is purposely placed there so as to be clearly visible from all directions, the veteran argues that 'we are not just anywhere here. This ground has become historical, for having known both glory and suffering.' [102]

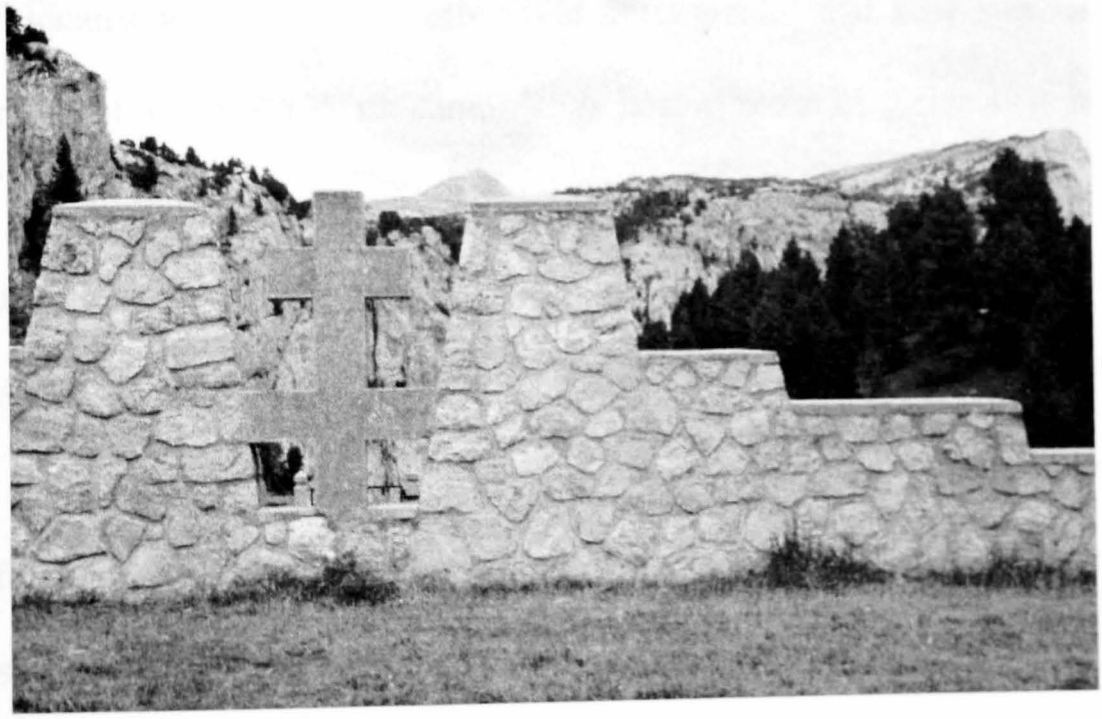

Figure 17. Rear view of the memorial at pas de Aiguille (July 2005). © Chris Pearson

Reconciling this landscape's historical and natural uses is increasingly fraught with difficulties, as those who have sought to use landscape as a way of

[102] 'Le mot du Chamois,' *Le Pionnier du Vercors*, nouvelle série, No. 2, April 1973, 14-5.

preserving and perpetuating resistance memories are discovering how unpredictable that very ground and its meanings can be.

Nature's challenge to memory

Although memories of resistance have been associated with landscapes and memorials actively engage with their surrounding natural environment, nature cannot automatically be relied upon to preserve memory. As well as being oblivious to human concerns to remember the past, nature is an active force with the ability to cover up, change, or challenge sites of historical significance. Schama, for instance, contrasts common perceptions of a grey, almost landscape-free Holocaust with the 'brilliantly vivid countryside' that now surrounds the former site of Treblinka death camp. [103] A jarring sense of dislocation between recent human tragedy and glorious natural beauty was also noted in the Vercors immediately after the German attack, where it was felt that nature almost disguised the atrocities. According to visiting Swiss journalists; 'as if to delay the laying bare of so much horror, the luminous mountain landscape seemed peaceful around the ruins.' For them, it was uncanny to experience 'the surprising silence of the pastures without herds, in the immense calm of a land swelled with the dead, apparently left to its natural tranquillity.' [104] Similarly, in Normandy, a year after the D-Day landings, relief worker Francesca Wilson discovered a peaceful and bucolic landscape far removed from the destruction of military invasion. [105]

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[103] Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 26.
[104] Béguin, 'Au seuil de l'enfer,' 22, 38.
[105] Wilson found Normandy 'a graceful country of orchard, pasture, and ploughed field' where the trees shone 'in the enamel of their fresh leaves, and the air was full of the faint songs and

At sites where France carried out or experienced dishonourable and humiliating wartime events, nature, left to its own devices, can unwittingly cover up the past. Earlier in this chapter I argued that wartime memories have been bound to forest and *maquis* vegetation. Yet vegetation also obscures memory. At the former site of Les Milles internment and transit camp near Aix-en-Provence, grass and weeds obscure the train tracks that transported internees to and from the camp (for some, the final destination was the concentration camps of Eastern Europe) [figure eighteen].

Figure 18. Buried railway tracks at site of Les Milles camp near Aix-en-Provence (March 2004). © Chris Pearson

At the Gurs internment camp in the Pyrénées-Orientales, one website notes how 'of the camp, there remains very little. Goats graze peacefully in the fields. The

rustles of a spring warm as midsummer.' Wilson, *Aftermath*, 20. Some Allied soldiers were themselves surprised by the beauty and apparent calm of Normandy's pastoral landscapes during the D-Day invasions. See Footitt, *War and Liberation in France*, 42.

long central road is now bordered with trees.' [106] Similarly, at the Saliers internment camp in the Camargue, the site where approximately 700 Roma had been interned in horrific conditions from 1942 to 1944 reverted to being an unmarked field once the buildings had been pulled down after being used as backdrop for Henri-Georges Clouzot's 1953 film *Le salaire de la peur* (figure nineteen).

Figure 19. Site of Saliers internment camp, the Camargue (March 2004). © Chris Pearson

This site gave little indication of its former function in Vichy's system of oppression. As an article in *Le Marseillaise* notes, 'nothing indicates the

[106] To preserve memory at this site, several barracks have been built and a memorial erected to commemorate Jewish deportees. 'Le camp de Gurs aujourd'hui,' Camp de Gurs website http://gurs.free.fr/aujourdhui.html, accessed 4 April 2006. For a discussion of France's difficulty in dealing with internment camp sites see Olivier Lalieu, 'La difficile mémoire des lieux d'internement en France,' *Revue d'histoire de la Shoah/ Le Monde Juif "Génocides lieux (et non-lieux) de mémoire,"* 181 (2004): 177-87.

presence of the camp among the immense rice fields.' [107] The unmarked site both perpetuated and reflected a lack of recognition given to the persecution of the Roma during the war.

At such sites of persecution, recent efforts have been made to physically "recover" the war years' physical traces and mark the site as one of national significance. [108] At Les Milles, a section of train track and platform have been recovered from the undergrowth to form part of the "wagon-souvenir" memorial to the camp's deportees (figure twenty).

Figure 20. Recovered platform at Les Milles (March 2004). © Chris Pearson

The wagon-souvenir memorial is a sign that traces of the war have to be recovered and then protected from nature's regenerative processes. [109]

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[107] Isabelle Wesselingh, 'Le camp de concentration "oublié" de Camargue,' *Le Marseillaise*, 3 February 2006.

[108] These efforts are linked to wider changes in the acknowledgement of wartime persecution. According to Rousso, memories of Jewish persecution became "obsessional" from the 1970s and 1980s onwards. See *Vichy Syndrome*, 132-67.

[109] For a history of Les Milles camp see André Fontaine, *Le camp d'étrangers des Milles 1939-1943 [Aix-en-Provence]* (Aix-en-Provence: Édisud, 1989)

A similar act of memory reclamation has recently taken place at Saliers. After pressure from local Roma associations and of its own initiative, Arles town hall decided to 'commemorate memories directly on the site where the camp stood, so that its memory is never effaced and is preserved for the future.' [110] A steel memorial now physically designates this unmarked field as a site of memory and represents the first memorial dedicated to the persecution of Roma on French soil during the Second World War (figure twenty one).

Figure 21. Memorial to Saliers camp by Jean-Claude Guerri with Roma flag in the foreground, inaugurated 2 February 2006. © Chris Pearson

As the erection of the Saliers memorial demonstrates, active intervention is needed to mark out sites of memory within natural landscapes.

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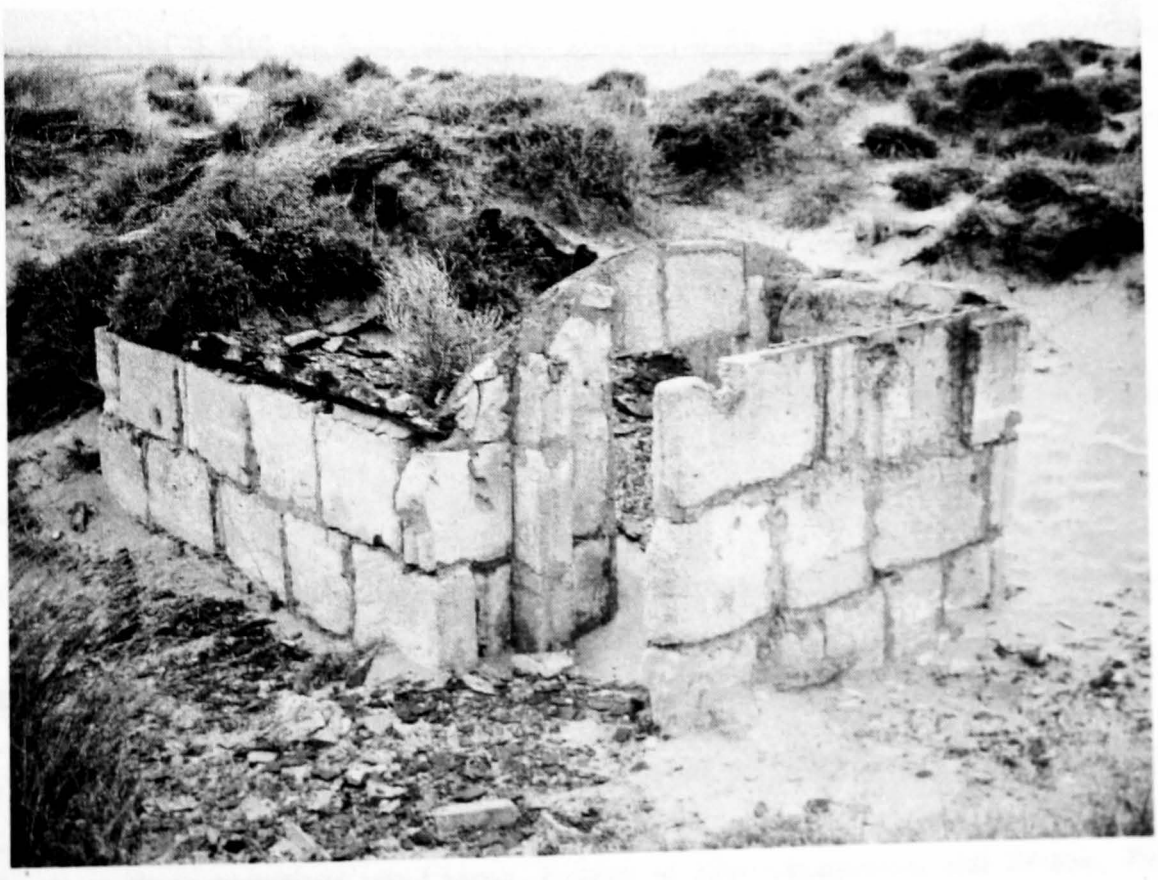
[110] Nicolas Koukas, Adjoint au Maire, Municipal Council Session, 'Projet de déliberation: attribution d'une subvention au Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation pour l'installation de deux sculptures en mémoire du camp gitan de Saliers,' 25 November 2004. Document supplied by Nicolas Koukas. This project was carried out under the auspices of the local Association du Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation.

Just as nature had to be taken into account during the war, it has become a factor in the preservation (or not) of wartime memories. For instance, nature is overtaking the ruins of Nazi defensive bunkers in Normandy. Photographer Ianthe Rutheven documents how roots, lichen, and erosion have taken hold of the bunkers, slowly ensuring their decay. In the words of Rutheven; 'it really brought home to me the madness, the insanity and arrogance of [the Nazis], and the calm advance of nature, quietly covering over what terrible things they have done. [111] It seems that for Rutheven, nature acts in opposition to Nazism as it simultaneously covers up, combines with, and erodes the bunkers. Similarly, the remains of German defensive installations are slowly but surely degrading on the edge of the Camargue's Nature Reserve (figures twenty two and twenty three). In their exposed position on the shoreline, bunkers lie half buried in the sand and rusting shells and other military debris litter the beach.



[111] Quoted in Joanna Pitman, 'View from the Bunker,' *The Times*, Weekend Review, 5 June 2004, 20. See also Ianthe Ruthven's website at www.iantherutheven.com/content/view/25/47/, accessed 20 June 2006.

Figure 21. and Figure 22. The remains of German military defensives, in the Réserve nationale de Camargue near the Phare de la Gacholle (March 2005). © Chris Pearson

Like the Normandy bunkers, these remains are a symbol of the German Occupation and a reminder that France was defeated militarily. As this exposed beach was neither a site of resistance nor persecution, it has no place in postwar narratives of glorifying resistance or remembering repression. [112] As such, there is little incentive to preserve these sites. Indeed, the nature reserve's director is happy for them to be swallowed up by the sea. [113]

In the case of German military installations and internment camps, nature has been allowed to obscure the traces of the past. But at those sites deemed worthy of conservation and commemoration, the preservers of memory have had to engage with nature's "agency" from the outset. This is because they seek to "freeze" time and memory. As Edward Linenthal highlights with regard to US

[112] For more on these narratives see Lagrou, *Legacy of Nazi Occupation*; and Rousso, *Vichy Syndrome*.

[113] Conversation with Eric Coulet, Director of the Réserve nationale de Camargue, 23 March 2005. Elsewhere, at the Pointe de Raz in Brittany German bunkers were dynamited as part of a project to remove human traces from the site. See Bess, *Light-Green Society*, 167-8.

Civil War battlefields, 'physical preservation is designed to preserve the sanctity of the site itself' and, consequently, guardians of memory attempt to "freeze" the natural landscape of the battlefield as it was at the time of the battle so that visitors can reflect on the meaning of the epic event in an "authentic" landscape.'[114] In France, similar efforts have been made to hold back time and nature at certain sites to maintain their "authenticity," but this has proved a problematic approach.

One of the most famous cases in France of an attempt to "freeze" memory is that of the "martyred" village of Oradour-sur-Glane where an act of reprisal by German forces ended in 642 civilian deaths and the physical destruction of the village. In the massacre's aftermath, the local Comité du Souvenir (supported by Charles de Gaulle) took the decision to preserve the ruins as an eternal reminder of Nazi barbarism and French suffering during the "dark years." Having actively sought to "freeze" memory through preserving the ruins, the guardians of memory have discovered that their efforts have been undermined by the natural environment in which the ruins stand. As Sarah Farmer observes, weather has eroded the ruins, softening and romanticising them so that they now 'convey a mood of not unpleasant melancholy, rather than revulsion at horror.' Moreover, the ruins require active human intervention if they are to be conserved, raising difficult questions about their historical authenticity. As Farmer argues, 'it is almost as if the ruins mock the very effort of this particular commemoration, as their progressive erosion reveals the impossibility of fixing both time and memory.'[115]

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[114] Linenthal, *Sacred Ground*, 5.

[115] Farmer, *Martyred Village*, 201. Sherman also notes how one critic attacked commercially produced World War One memorials for the way that the weather quickly 'dilapidated' them. Sherman, 'Art, Commerce, and the Production of Memory,' 194.

In the Vercors, the natural environment also impacts upon the preservation of wartime sites and objects. Weather erodes the metal shells of the S.S. gliders that landed at Vassieux-en-Vercors in July 1944, which are now on display in the village. Preservation efforts have not been entirely successful and rust breaks through the layers of paint applied to the gliders. Furthermore, in the ruined village of Valchevrière, nature is in the process of reclaiming the houses that remained following the German assault. The SNHRV planned to keep the village in its 'rundown state' (*état de friche*) as the site supposedly 'speaks for itself' as symbolic of a place where 'life has stopped.' [116] Nature, however, has not stopped and vegetation is now poised to swamp the ruins (figure twenty-four).

Figure 23. In among the weeds: the ruins of Valchevrière (July 2005). © Chris Pearson

[116] 'Les sites historiques,' in *Site national historique de la Résistance en Vercors*.

Steps, however, are being taken to restrain nature's relentless onward march. One former *maquisard* regularly visits the site and attempts to cut back the vegetation, although he admits that nature is taking over Valchevrière ('la nature reprend ses droits'). [117] The environmental services of Villard-de-Lans manage the ruins, clearing trees and other vegetation and replanting some species, such as walnut and lime trees. A desire to maintain the ruined village's 'natural aspect' informs this management. [118] However, the rapid growth of weeds, grasses, bushes, and trees means that more dynamic and interventionist management of the site is under consideration to secure its future. [119]

As the case of Valchevrière demonstrates, active human intervention is needed to preserve the "natural state" of ruins because if nature were left to run riot the site would change beyond all recognition. This paradox reveals how nature, the supposed preserver of memory, becomes the destroyer of memory. This difficulty of preserving ruins within a dynamic natural environment is just one facet of the complex relationship between nature and memory that this chapter has outlined, and a further indication that nature mattered both during and after the war.

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[117] Interview with Eloi Arribert-Narce, Villard-de-Lans, 2 August 2005. Notes and tapes in author's possession.

[118] Email communication with Karen Faure-Comte, Maison du patrimoine, Villard-de-Lans, August 17, 2004.

[119] Propositions for the site include removing trees to improve views, ridding walls and other built structures of vegetative growth, and erecting information boards to explain the site to visitors. 'Compte-rendu de la réunion de travail sur site du 22.10.04 Valchevrière.' 27 October 2004. Document provided by Karen-Faure-Comte.

Conclusion

Nature mattered during the "dark years" in numerous and complex ways. Over-exploited forests, fatal mountaineering expeditions, displaced flamingos, reforestation schemes, embattled nature preservationists, repetitions of "natural fortress" imagery, and rebellious *maquis* vegetation all point to the diversity of the war's environmental history and its aftermath. The environment was an unpredictable site of combat, a source of desperately needed natural resources, and a place in which to (re)create political and social identities. Although it has been overlooked by existing historiography, nature was a central component of the conflict, both materially and culturally.

Political appropriations and military mobilisations of the environment came from across the political and social spectrum, as the Vichy regime, resistance movements, and occupation and Allied armies endeavoured to turn nature into an ally. At the same time, state foresters battled to conserve France's natural resources and the SNAF strove to preserve its most valued landscapes. While they had some success, particularly in the Camargue, the years of war and occupation left an ecological footprint, necessitating the reconstruction of the environment in the postwar era. Although most of the physical traces of war have now been effaced from the landscape, the existence of thousands of memorials highlights the fact that the environment is now a site of remembrance, albeit one that cannot be taken for granted by France's "guardians of memory."

It may be tempting to see the four years between 1940 and 1944 as exceptional ones in contemporary French environmental history. For example, once coal and oil production and distribution resumed normal levels, France no

longer lived in the 'age of wood,' and *gazogène* cars have long since disappeared from the streets of Paris and other French cities. But there are strong elements of continuity, which link the war years with the pre- and post-war eras. Concerns over deforestation and the forest's productivity are cases in point and, while the history of *maquis* resistance groups is exceptional in many ways, their use and representation of the forest and mountain space echoed previous rebellions in France and elsewhere. In addition, organisations, such as CAF, adapted their longstanding aims and practices to fit with the circumstances of war and occupation. It is therefore impossible to fully understand the history of mountains during the war without recourse to existing notions of masculine regeneration amongst the peaks. In the same way, knowledge of the physical and cultural pre-war history of the Camargue is needed to comprehend why the SNAF strove to preserve its landscape and why the German submersion scheme threatened so severely the wetland's ecosystem.

Yet despite these continuities, the war was something of a turning point in French environmental history. The wartime conditions led to an intensification of existing environmental practices, such as tree felling, which, in turn, led to changes in environmental policies. Reforestation is a prime example of this. During the war, the state also increased its control over the forest and began implementing large-scale *aménagement* works, such as marsh drainage. In the postwar era, these developments provided the background for greater state intervention in environmental management, demonstrated by the FFN. On a more cultural level, the war transformed perceptions of *maquis* landscapes and invested sites, such as the Vercors, with new meanings.

Conclusion

My thesis has attempted to show the importance of nature during the "dark years" and narrate an unexplored area of its history. I have not been able to cover all aspects of the period's environmental history. To create a fuller picture of the interactions between nature, war, and occupation, more research is needed on other regions of France (work on the forests of Alsace and Lorraine, which were under direct German control and acted as sites of sustained military combat, would be particularly welcome). Also, due to space and time restrictions, I have been unable to explore the history of animals during the war. But based on preliminary archival findings (and tales of eagles being used to feed hungry French families), I believe that research into the history of poaching and hunting during the "dark years" richly merits greater attention. [1]

I have endeavoured to show that the environmental history of the "dark years" is valuable in its own right. My study has wider implications though, both in terms of historiography and societal concerns. Environmental historians note how environmental history has so far largely failed to realise its potential in terms of influencing the wider historiography. [2] Consequently, it has remained on the margins of historical inquiry. Given that war is a subject of long-standing interest to many historians it seems that environmental histories of war are well placed to illuminate the environmental dimensions of the past and the interconnectedness of human and nonhuman nature for the historical community at large. The case of France during the Second World War is particularly useful

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[1] Kedward explores the links between hunting and the resistance, but not from the perspective of environmental history. See 'La Résistance et la polyvalence de la chasse,' in Guillon and Mencherini, *Résistance et les Européens du Sud*, 245-55.

[2] Ted Steinberg, 'Down to Earth: Nature, Agency, and Power in History,' *American Historical Review* 107/3 (June 2002), accessed at http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/107.3/ah0302000798.html, 1; and Stroud, 'Does Nature Always Matter?' 76.

in this respect, as nature was an influential feature of a conflict that seemingly lacked environmental aspects. [3]

Regarding Vichy historiography, the environmental history of wartime France contributes to existing scholarship in numerous ways. For a start, it reinforces some of the key conclusions of Vichy historians. The history of forests supports Robert Paxton's argument that collaboration with Nazi Germany secured few, if any, advantages for France; given the extent to which Germany plundered France's forests, it is not possible to argue that Vichy acted as a "shield" protecting French woodland. Paxton's influential analysis of Vichy's agency has not been left unquestioned. Simon Kitson's work on counter-espionage is a recent nuancing of Paxton's arguments, which argues that Vichy's attempts to track down German spies were not acts of resistance but the actions of a regime torn between collaboration and independence. [4] The policy of the Forestry Administration can also be seen in this light, as it was forced to work with occupying forces whilst trying to preserve French sovereignty in the forest and uphold its scientific forestry principles.

Forest history also supports Paxton's identification of the tensions between traditionalists and technocrats that lay at the heart of the Vichy regime, and the continuities between the Third Republic, Vichy, and the Fourth Republic (such as the emphasis on reforestation), as well as Footitt's highlighting of post-Liberation tensions between Allied soldiers and the French authorities. [5] The

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[3] This begs the question: what was the role of nature in other conflicts of which the environmental dimension is not immediately apparent, such as the Spanish civil war?

[4] Simon Kitson, *Vichy et la chasse aux espions nazis 1940-1942: complexitiés de la politique de collaboration* (Paris: Autrement, 2005), 5.

[5] For traditionalist-technocratic divisions, see Paxton, *Vichy France*, 259-73; 352-57. Footitt underscores the ambiguity of the Allied-French relationship when she argues that 'the guests who were to arrive in France on 'D' Day were neither freely invited in, nor likely to leave at the whim of their hosts.' *War and Liberation*, 35.

wartime environmental history of forests and mountains also provide an alternative way of approaching Kedward's analysis of the ways in which the resistance assumed control of the French countryside. [6]

Furthermore, environmental history complements existing narratives. For instance, although Vichy's glorification of peasant values and preference for cultivated land is no secret, the material basis of this ideology has been left largely unexplored. In contrast, in chapter two I explored the efforts Vichy expended trying to cultivate *all* of French territory. In addition, focussing on war's materiality exposes the essential role that wood played in ensuring the continuation of everyday life. For although social histories stress the lack of food, petrol, and other supplies, they have yet to fully emphasis the importance of wood for heating homes, fuelling vehicles, and supplying industry.

Perhaps most significantly, environmental history provides new historical narratives on Vichy France. Not least, I stressed the lengths to which preservation groups such as the SNAF went to protect natural landscapes. This history of nature protection is noteworthy. For as well as providing evidence that wartime environmental destruction could be resisted, it shows that individuals continued to care about the natural environment despite personal and social problems. The SNAF's campaign to preserve the Camargue showed that there was some room for manoeuvre with the German authorities. Furthermore, it offers an alternative historical narrative to the well trodden ones of resistance, collaboration, and accommodation.

This is not to say that nature preservationists were divorced from the wider social and political context: they too were forced to interact with

[6] Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*.

occupying forces. Their priority, however, was preserving France's landscapes for the future and their main concern was the effect of military activity on the landscape rather than the identity of the combatants (which led to them opposing French and Allied air forces before the defeat and after Liberation). Yet this was not resistance in the classical sense, as the SNAF *only* openly opposed Vichy's and Germany's schemes when they threatened the environment. For instance, one contribution to the SNAF journal welcomed the 'possible application' of German nature conservation laws during the Occupation. [7] Nor did the SNAF seek to overthrow Vichy or expel the Germans from French soil. This suggests that we need to rethink the concept of resistance for these kinds of campaigns, just as Lynne Taylor has done for popular protests against food prices and working conditions. [8]

Beyond these historiographical concerns, environmental histories of warfare can inform an important public debate on war and the environment. Attention to this area has long-term roots. The links between nature and war were recognised before the rise of modern environmentalism; moral codes from the Bible onwards have sought to limit war-related damage to land and British observers during the world wars marked animals' contributions on the battlefield, as well as drawing attention to the plight of animals caught up in bombing raids.[9] More recently, the harrowing prospect of a nuclear holocaust, the extensive

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[7] A. Feuillée-Billot, 'Quelques observations sur les oiseaux pendant la guerre,' *Société nationale d'acclimatation: conferences* (1943), 166-7.

[8] Taylor, *Between Resistance and Collaboration.*

[9] On laws and moral codes, see Environmental Law Institute, *Addressing Environmental Consequences of War*, 3; and Karen Hulme, *War Torn Environment: Interpreting the Legal Threshold* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2004). On animals during the world wars, see Frank Hart, *The Animals do their bit in the Great War* (London: Blackie and Son, 1918); Sidney Galtrey, *The Horse and War* (London: Country Life and George Newnes, 1918); and Lizzy Lind-Af-Hageby, *Bombed Animals, Rescued Animals, Animals Saved from Destruction: Typical Cases from the Records of the Animal Defence Society's War Work and Some Comment* (London: Animal Defence & Anti-Vivisection Society, 1941).

defoliation of Vietnamese jungles, and burning oil wells during the Persian Gulf War of 1990-1, have all raised public awareness about the environmental impacts of war. Furthermore, soldiers, who are frequently the agents of war's environmental destruction, are not oblivious to the natural world, as the bird-watching activity of Sergeant Jonathan Trouern-Trend, a Connecticut Army National Guardsman and committed twitcher stationed in Iraq in 2004, amply demonstrates. [10] Today, the level of attention that the subject is receiving from scientists, environmentalists, and governments around the world is unprecedented.

Scientists and others highlighted the ramifications of wars in the Gulf and the Balkans during the 1990s, while contemporary international law and organisations such as Green Cross International undertake to restrict war's ecological impact. [11] Scholars also have become concerned about the military use of land in the name of national defence and social scientists seek to understand the link between war and natural resources. [12] Beyond the academy, museums curate exhibitions on animals at war, memorials are erected to commemorate the

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[10] Jonathan Trouern-Trend, *Birding Babylon: A Soldier's Journal from Iraq* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2006).

[11] See Farouk El-Baz and R.M. Makharita (eds.), *The Gulf War and the Environment* (Lausanne: Gordon and Breach, 1994); Bernard Nietschmann, 'Battlefields of Ash and Mud,' *Natural History* 11/90 (November 1990): 35-7; Mervyn Richardson (ed.), *The Effect of War on the Environment: Croatia* (London: E & FN Spon, 1995); *Survivre et revivre: guerre et destruction de l'environnement en Croatie, 1991* (La Possonière: Environnement sans frontière, 1994); and Vadort, *Guerres et environnement*. The 1977 Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions prohibits 'methods or means of warfare which are intended, or may be expected, to cause widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment.' Environmental Law Institute Research Report, *Addressing Environmental Consequences of War*, 5. Mikhail Gorbachev founded Green Cross International in 1993. Its mission statement can be accessed at www.greencrossinternational.net/GreenCross Family/index.html.

[12] For military use of the land, see John Childs, *The Military Use of the Land: A History of the Defence Estate* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1998); Stephen Dycus, *National Defense and the Environment* (Hanover NH and London: University Press of New England, 1986); and Käkönen, *Green Security*. For war and natural resources, see Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, *Environment, Scarcity, and Violence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Philippe Le Billon, *Fuelling War: Natural Resources and Armed Conflict* (Abingdon: Routledge: 2005); and Nancy Lee Peluso and Michael Watts (eds.), *Violent Environments* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

contribution of animals in battle, and conservation organisations, such as English Heritage, now assess the best way to preserve Cold War landscapes. [13]

As these examples indicate, policy makers, scholars, and the public are now demonstrating a greater awareness and apprehension about the linkages between war and the environment. By illuminating the historical context of the war-nature relationship, environmental historians can promote greater understanding of how societies exploit natural resources during wartime, of how combatants mobilise the environment, and of how ecosystems recover (or not) from war's ecological effects. Past case studies, such as the SNAF's efforts to protect the Camargue, also highlight the possibilities and challenges of nature protection during times of military conflict. Moreover, given that most of today's wars are fought with conventional weapons and many involve guerrilla warfare, the case of France during the Second World War may prove particularly significant. For although it would be extremely rash to deploy it as a model for predicting how the war-nature relationship will unfold in the future, the history of nature and the environment in South East France during the "dark years" is a timely reminder of the multiple ways in which nature matters during and after war.

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[13] The Imperial War Museum in London has curated an exhibition entitled 'The Animal's War' running from 14 July 2006 to 22 April 2007 (see http://www.iwm.org.uk/upload/package/74/AnimalsWar/index.htm). Jilly Cooper's *Animals in War* (London: Heineman, 1983) is based on a previous Imperial War Museum exhibition. A memorial to animal "combatants" has recently been erected on Park Lane, London. For English Heritage and Cold War landscapes, see Wayne D. Cocroft and Roger J. C. Thomas, *Cold War: Building for Nuclear Confrontation 1946-1989* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2003); and John Schofield (ed.), *Monuments of War: The Evaluation, Recording and Management of Twentieth Century Military Sites* (London: English Heritage, 1998).

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